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Topher Grace's skills grow for big screen role

Page 18



Actor
Topher
Grace

Indiana Guard unit keeps an eye on Kabul nabe

Page 5



Golden Globes honor 'Aviator' and 'Sideways'

Page 14

Actors Hilary Swank and Leonardo DiCaprio win best acting awards

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TUESDAY, JANUARY 18, 2005

More than 20 killed in Iraq violence

At least 16 Iraqi security forces killed in separate attacks

Page 3



Left: Philadelphia Eagles' Brian Westbrook celebrates his TD reception during the first half of the Eagles' 27-14 win over the Minnesota Vikings in Sunday's NFC divisional playoff game in Philadelphia. Right: New England Patriots running back Corey Dillon flies out of bounds short of the goal line during the second half of their AFC divisional playoff against the Indianapolis Colts on Sunday in Foxboro, Mass. The Pats beat the Colts 20-3.

Eagles, Pats to play on



AP photos

■ New England stops Indy's offense, sets up rematch with Steelers for AFC title

■ Eagles show no rust, earn trip to fourth consecutive NFC title game

■ Pats' Dillon enjoys first playoff game

**Back page,
Pages 29-30**

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News Tracker ... What's new with old news

Nation

Veterans Day parade death: A World War II veteran won't face charges for killing a friend he struck with a van he was driving at the start of Whitman's Veterans Day parade, the man's lawyer says.

Brockton District Court Clerk Magistrate Kevin Creedon, who heard the vehicular homicide complaint filed by Whitman police against Joseph E. Davis, found no probable cause to send the case for prosecution and dismissed the complaint last week.

"They are happy to have it behind them," Davis' attorney, Patrick Gannon, told the Boston Herald. "It's unfortunate the families had to go through an additional eight weeks of wondering what was going to happen in a case that never should have been prosecuted in the first place. The clerk clearly saw that this was nothing but a tragic accident and I'm glad he acted accordingly."

Utah avalanche: Trained dogs found the body of one of five skiers feared buried beneath tons of snow left by a powerful avalanche. Sweat shirts and gloves also were found, possibly indicating more victims are nearby.

The body of Shane Maizner, 27, of Sandpoint, Idaho, was found Sunday under 4 feet of snow as searchers scoured the area of Friday's slide, Summit County Sheriff Dave Edmunds said at a news conference.

"If anybody could have survived, it would have been Shane," his father, Joel Maizner, said from his North Dakota home. "He was in excellent condition. But the sheriff told me his head and chest were slammed into a tree. He died without a fight."

Edmunds said other clothing was discovered during Sunday's search, leading rescuers to suspect that more victims are close at hand.

Flooding in Midwest: Water levels remained well above flood stage along the Wabash River in southwestern Indiana on Sunday as residents and National Guard troops sandbagged to protect against leaking levees.

About 32,000 sandbags have been made available to shore up a levee in West Terre Haute where the crest was expected to be the highest since 1950, according to the State Emergency Management Agency Web site. Nearly 100 National Guard troops were helping, said SEMA spokesman Alden Taylor.

Two sections of a levee in the town gave way or were swamped by floodwaters Saturday that reached more than 13 feet above the 14-foot flood stage, officials said. No damage was reported due to houses, SEMA said, but about 120 people were evacuated.

The river Sunday was at 27.3 feet, which was where it was expected to crest, according to the National Weather Service. The river was expected to fall to 26.4 feet by Wednesday, the NWS said.

War on terrorism

Australian Gtmo prisoner: Australian and U.S. authorities are still negotiating the terms of release of an Australian man held for three years without charge at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, a spokeswoman for the attorney general said Monday.

Mamdouh Habib, a 48-year-old Egyptian-born father of four from Sydney, was captured near the Pakistan-Afghan border three weeks after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States and has since been imprisoned at the U.S. military camp on suspicion of aiding al-Qaida.

During his three years in custody, Habib



Ukraine election: Supporters of former Ukrainian Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich, losing presidential candidate, shout and hold Yanukovich election posters with his portrait during a rally in Donetsk, Yanukovich's stronghold of Ukraine's eastern region. Blue-and-white flags — Yanukovich's campaign colors — are seen in the background. The Supreme Court began hearings Monday on what appeared to be the last appeal by Yanukovich over alleged fraud in the presidential election he lost to Ukrainian opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko.

confessed to knowing about the Sept. 11 plot in advance and said he'd helped train some of the hijackers in martial arts. Habib's lawyers say he was coerced into making the confessions.

Last week, the United States announced that Habib would be freed without charge and returned to Australia.

World

'Batman' strikes again: A man in a Batman suit spent several hours on a rooftop balcony atop a courthouse in the Dutch city of Utrecht on Monday, protesting the treatment of fathers in divorce cases.

Police initially said they planned to ignore the man, a member of the group Fathers for Justice, until he came down.

But police spokeswoman Wendy Alberse said the man, whose name was not released, struck a deal to surrender peacefully. Police offered him a ladder and he climbed through a window to safety, she said.

"He won't be charged, and he has promised not to do it again," Alberse said.

Prince Harry's costume blunder: The European Union may consider banning Nazi symbols in its 25 member nations after Britain's Prince Harry wore a swastika armband to a costume party, the bloc's top justice official said Monday.

Franco Frattini, the EU's justice and home affairs commissioner, said he was open to discussing the issue at a Jan. 27 meeting of EU justice ministers.

"It may be worth looking into the possibility of a total ban, a Europe-wide ban," his spokesman, Friso Roscam Abbing, told reporters Monday. "Commissioner Frattini shares the general feeling of opprobrium on the use of the swastika and other Nazi symbols."

Srebrenica massacre: Two former Bosnian Serb army commanders were convicted and sentenced to lengthy prison terms Monday for their roles in the 1995 massacre of Muslims from Srebrenica, Bosnia.

Col. Vidoje Blagojevic, 54, a wartime commander of the Bratunac brigade, which took part in the killing of more than 7,000 Muslims in eastern Bosnia, was sentenced to 18 years for complicity in genocide and other war crimes.

Dragan Jokic, 47, a major in the Zvornik brigade who assumed command during a week of killing at the end of the 1992-1995 war, received a nine-year sentence. He was convicted of murder, extermination and persecution on racial grounds.

Deadly clashes in Kuwait: Authorities have up to 15 Kuwaitis and Saudi Arabians in custody in relation to last week's two deadly clashes with Muslim fundamentalists, the interior minister said Monday.

Sheik Nawwaf Al Ahmed Al Sabah declined to say if the suspects had connections to terrorist organizations such as Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida. A day earlier, the Cabinet condemned the two shootings as acts of terrorism.

"Between the two incidents, (we have) 10 to 15 in custody," he told reporters. He said the suspects were Kuwaiti and Saudi Arabian.

He said security cooperation between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, which has also seen a spate of similar terrorist incidents, was "absolute."

"We will not hesitate in storming any location," he said.

Military

Shooting involving Marine: A Marine who killed one town police officer and wounded another one was a gang member who was high on cocaine, not a combat veteran suffering from post-traumatic stress, police said.

Investigators said they are discounting a theory that Lance Pl. Andres Raya, 19, may have instigated a "suicide by cop" — provoking officers to shoot him — because he did not want to return to Iraq.

During our investigation, we found he wasn't due to go back to Iraq, never faced combat situations and never even fired his gun," Stanislaus County Sheriff's Deputy John Woodman said Saturday.

Raya shot the two officers with a rifle outside a liquor store on Jan. 9 before police returned fire and killed him.

Stories and photos from The Associated Press



Prince Harry

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Sunday, at least 1,363 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 1,071 died as a result of hostile action, the Defense Department said. The figures include three military civilians.

The AP count is five higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated at 10 a.m. Friday.

The British military has reported 76 deaths; Italy, 19; Poland, 16; Ukraine, 16; Spain, 11; Bulgaria, seven; Slovakia, three; Estonia, Thailand and the Netherlands, two each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary, Latvia and Kazakhstan one death each.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,225 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 962 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

■ A U.S. soldier was killed Sunday when an armored vehicle flipped and plunged into a canal in western Baghdad.

The latest identifications reported by the military:

■ No identifications reported.



Afaf Alhariri registers to vote Monday in New Carrollton, Md., for the Jan. 30 Iraqi elections. Iraqi expatriates began registering to vote in U.S. cities for their homeland's first independent election in nearly 50 years.

Iraqi exiles register for nation's election

By Ed Johnson

The Associated Press

LONDON — Exiled Iraqis began registering to vote Monday in their homeland's first independent elections in nearly 50 years, with dozens arriving at polling stations in 14 countries from Australia to Britain to the United States — and many expressing confusion at the process.

At a London registration center near Wembley Stadium, Saieb Jabbar, who left Baghdad in 1980, registered with his 23-year-old son, Ahmed, who made his only visit to Iraq recently. Both were eager to vote.

"We lived in a dictatorship a long time, and it's the first time in my life, in my 48 years, that I can vote in Iraq," Saieb Jabbar said. "I feel very happy."

Britain set up three polling centers — in Glasgow, Manchester and London — which meant voters had to travel long distances several times, first to register and then to cast their ballot.

Eligible Iraqis abroad — estimated to number 12 million — can vote in Britain, Australia, Sweden, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Iran, Jordan, the Netherlands, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and the United States.

Voting will be held in six cities in Iran, five in the United States,

See related stories on Page 7

four in Germany, and three in the Netherlands and Canada.

The seven-day registration period ends Jan. 23. Voting will begin Jan. 28 and continue until the Jan. 30 elections in Iraq for an assembly that will draft a constitution.

The walls of the registration center in Berlin were plastered with posters showing a Muslim woman in front of the Brandenburg Gate holding the Iraqi flag with a German slogan saying, "It's the same wherever I am — my heart is in the homeland."

Hussein Al-Nasrari, an engineer, said he made sure to register on the first day because he believes free elections are the only hope for his country.

"The future of the world is democracy," he said in German. "The situation for this vote is not optimal, that is clear, but for the future it is a good beginning."

But in Damascus, Syria, registrar Musab al-Rifai said he believed many of his countrymen would not register "because they are unconvinced that their vote would change anything."

In the United States, Iraqi expatriates have begun registering in Washington, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles and Nashville, Tenn.



Iraqi policemen burn election posters of interim Prime Minister Alawi on Monday as they rally through the streets of Najaf. Policemen demanded their salaries for past several months.

Rebels target Iraqi forces

More than 20 die in attacks aimed at derailing vote

By Robert H. Reid

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Gunmen targeted security forces in a series of brutal attacks Monday that killed more than 20 people. A suicide bomber attacked U.S. Marines in Ramadi, where two Shiite Muslims were beheaded and their bodies left on a sidewalk.

In Mosul, a Catholic archbishop was kidnapped. The top U.S. general here predicted more violence on the Jan. 30 balloting but pledged to do "everything in our power" to ensure safety. U.S. and Iraqi authorities hope for a substantial turnout, especially from the long-suppressed Shiite Muslim majority.

The deadliest attacks occurred in the three insurgent flashpoint cities north and west of Baghdad in areas where Sunni Muslim insurgents are seeking to derail the balloting.

In Buhzir, 35 miles north of Baghdad, gunmen attacked an Iraqi National Guard checkpoint at the provincial broadcasting center, killing eight soldiers and wounding four. A suicide driver blasted a police station in Beiji, 155 miles north of the capital, killing seven policemen and wounding 25 people.

A U.S. spokesman said Marines suffered an undisclosed number of casualties in a suicide car bombing in Ramadi, 70 miles west of Baghdad. The Marines were sent to check a suspicious vehicle and when they arrived, they came under small arms and rocket-propelled grenade fire and the vehicle exploded.

"There were U.S. casualties," 1st Lt. Lyle Gilbert said. He declined to give further details, citing security.

Also in Ramadi, officials Monday found six bodies — five civilians and one Iraqi soldier — each bearing handwritten notes declaring them collaborators, officials said. Four had been shot but two were beheaded, their blood-soaked bodies left where they died.

A note left beside the bodies said they were Shiites who confessed to spying for the Americans. They were seized after leaving an American garrison in the middle of the city, the note said.

Shiites have been targets of intimidation because they are expected to turn out in large numbers for the election, in which Iraqis will choose a 275-member National Assembly that will appoint a new government and draft a permanent constitution.

Shiites form about 60 percent of Iraq's 26 million population, and their candidates are expected to win most of the assembly seats. Many Sunni Arabs fear

the loss of power they enjoyed under Saddam Hussein. Sunni clerics have called for a boycott, and U.S. officials fear a low Sunni turnout may cast doubt on the legitimacy of the new government.

On Monday, police discovered a car loaded with explosives in the Shiite holy city of Karbala. On Sunday, a total of 17 people were killed in attacks along the main highway from Baghdad to Kut, 100 miles to the southeast.

Many Shiites have been using the Kut highway for travel to the south to avoid a more direct route which passes through the "triangle of death," where Sunni extremists have been targeting Shiites, foreigners, government officials and security personnel.

In Kut, gunmen broke into an administration building at Wasit University early Monday, wounded two guards and ransacked some offices, police said. University authorities postponed exams until after the election. Kut is in a largely Shiite province which U.S. officials said was safe for elections.

In a statement Monday, Gen. George W. Casey Jr., commander of the multinational forces, said about 300,000 U.S., Iraqi and other international forces will be available to protect voters.

"Is there going to be violence on election day? There is, but it's important that we understand what's happening here," Casey said. "It's not just about violence. It's about former regime loyalists and foreign terrorists murdering innocent Iraqis and Iraqi security forces to stop them from exercising their right to vote."

Nevertheless, violence has already impacted on the exercise in democracy. Some political alliances have declined to release all the names of their candidates for fear of attack, and little public campaigning has been possible except in Kurdish areas of the north.

Shiite politician Salama Khafaji, who survived an ambush Sunday in central Baghdad by gunmen wearing police uniforms, said she canceled campaigning in the south after her staff discovered terrorist checkpoints on major routes.

In Mosul, Archbishop Basile Georges Cassmoussa, 66, of the Syrian Catholic Church, was seized while walking in front of his church, a priest said on condition of anonymity. No group claimed responsibility, but the Vatican condemned the abduction as a "terrorist act."

Christians make up just 3 percent of Iraq's 26 million people.

The major Christian groups include Chaldean Assyrians and Armenians with small numbers of Roman Catholics.

No evidence WMD were moved from Iraq

BY KATHERINE
PFLEGER SHRAIDER
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — As the hunt for weapons of mass destruction dragged on unsuccessfully in Iraq, top Bush administration officials speculated publicly that the banned armaments may have been smuggled out of the country before the war.

Whether Saddam Hussein moved the WMD — deadly chemical, biological or radiological arms — is one of the unresolved issues that the final U.S. intelligence report on Iraq's programs is expected to address next month.

But intelligence and congressional officials

said they have not seen any information — never “a piece,” said one — indicating that WMD or significant amounts of components and equipment were transferred from Iraq to neighboring Syria, Jordan or elsewhere.

The administration acknowledged last week that the search for banned weapons is largely over. The Iraq Survey Group's chief, Charles Duelfer, is expected to submit his final installment of his report in February. A small number of the organization's experts will remain on the job in case new intelligence on Iraqi WMD is unearthed.

A special adviser to the CIA director,

Duelfer declined an interview request through an agency spokesman. In his last public statements, he told a Senate panel last October that it remained unclear whether banned weapons could have been moved from Iraq.

Last week, a congressional official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said suggestions that weapons or components were sent from Iraq were based on speculation stemming from uncorroborated information.

President Bush and top-ranking officials in his administration used the existence of WMD in Iraq as the main justification for the March 2003 invasion, and

throughout much of last year the White House continued to raise the possibility the weapons were transferred to another country.

Since the October report from Duelfer, which said Saddam intended to obtain WMD but had no banned weapons, senior administration leaders have largely stopped discussing whether the weapons were moved.

Last week, the intelligence and congressional officials said there was evidence indicating that somewhat common equipment with dual military and civilian uses, such as fermenters, was salvaged during post-invasion looting and sold for scrap in other countries.

Four months later, 2nd Brigade sees changes in Ramadi

Residents are more cooperative, but attacks from insurgents grow as Iraqi elections near

BY JOSEPH GIORDONO
Stars and Stripes

RAMADI, Iraq — Four months ago, when the 2nd Brigade Combat Team arrived in Ramadi, the local population certainly did not roll out the welcome mat. In the intervening months, as the brigade adjusted its operations and sought more interaction, the relationship has gotten decidedly better.

With the Jan. 30 elections looming in Ramadi — one of Iraq's

“We staged ambushes out of people's houses and killed nine-man terror squads,” Patton said. Before, he said, some would have alerted the insurgents to their presence.

“Things we couldn't do four months ago, we've done in the past 45 days.”

The brigade, which includes 3,500 soldiers, has completed \$1.5 million worth of civil projects during that time and helped create 800 new jobs, officials said. Universities and schools opened on time this fall, and city officials are returning to their jobs.

But brigade officials acknowledge they are in the midst of what Patton called a “classic counterinsurgency fight” in a city with a population approaching 400,000.

Since deploying to Iraq, the brigade has lost at least 36 soldiers to enemy attacks ranging from small-arms fire to roadside bombs. Dozens more soldiers have been seriously wounded.

The peak of the attacks happened during Ramadan and included 18 suicide car bomb attacks, said Maj. Steve Alexander, brigade operations officer.

“That was the defining event so far,” he said. “That was when we saw a serious spike in violence.”

Since then, things quieted a little, he said. But as the elections draw closer, the brigade is seeing the action pick up again. Patrols have come under fire nearly every day, mortars have been shot at bases and a crowd of children threw rocks at one unit last week.

The insurgents around Ramadi are made up of at least five different groups, Alexander said, ranging from former Baathists to foreign fighters bent on jihad.

“The former regime elements really have the most long-term goals and long-term strategy,” he said. “The jihadists seem much more interested in just killing people.”

Most of the groups have shifted



ANDREW D. YOUNG/Courtesy 2nd Brigade Combat Team

Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment pass out blankets and food in a town south of Ramadi. The mission, dubbed Operation Robin Hood, is part of the 2nd Brigade's efforts to build a relationship with the local population.

their focus to an intimidation campaign targeting anyone — especially local Iraqi National Guardsmen or Iraqi police — who work with U.S. troops. But each part of the insurgency has its specialties, Alexander said. Some are former

mortarmen from Saddam's army; others are former secret service agents who are trained in terror and intimidation; others are simple direct-action cells who attack with small arms.

“They can't be underestimated operationally or strategically,” he said. “But tactically, we always win.”

For the elections, the brigade has received a special battalion of Iraqi commandos who have fought alongside U.S. units from Mosul to Fallujah. The key, said Maj. Robert Proctor, the bri-

gade's Iraqi Security Forces development officer, is that the commandos are not from the local area.

The intimidation campaign — which saw five of the eight police stations in Ramadi destroyed or looted by insurgents — largely doesn't work on the commandos, Proctor said.

“The question I always ask, and one that I haven't gotten a straight answer to yet, is ‘What was Ramadi like five years ago?’”

Maj. Tom Munsey
2nd Brigade fire support and information operations officer

The commando battalion, led by a career military man named Col. Muhammad, has already started patrols with 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry soldiers in downtown Ramadi. The big test will come on election day, both for the Iraqi

and U.S. forces, officials said.

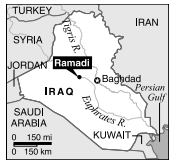
One challenge, Maj. Tom Munsey, the brigade fire support and information operations officer, said is the relatively high illiteracy rate outside of Ramadi, which was once known as a university town.

“The big impression I get is that the people of Ramadi are tired of the fighting,” Munsey said. “The question I always ask, and one that I haven't gotten a straight answer to yet, is ‘What was Ramadi like five years ago?’”

Second Brigade officials bristle at comparisons of Ramadi to Fallujah or reports that label it an “insurgent stronghold.” Since Day One, they note, 2nd Brigade soldiers have patrolled in Ramadi; on the other hand, Fallujah was a “no-go” zone for coalition forces until the November assault.

“It's a contested city, that's for sure. I don't think we can quite see the light at the end of the tunnel yet,” said Alexander, the operations officer. “But we've at least turned the corner and can see some doors we might be able to get to.”

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AP/Stars and Stripes

most dangerous cities for U.S. servicemen — 2nd Infantry Division officials say they have a plan in place and are encouraged by a change in sentiments around the region.

“Four months ago, we were doing ‘movement to contact’ patrols every day. We were an obtrusive presence,” Col. Gary S. Patton, brigade commander, said Saturday. “Now, we've established a security base in the city, and we're doing more precision raids. We're getting good intel from the local population. When we first got here, that wasn't happening.”

Patton points to two recent examples. Last week, acting on a tip, 2nd Brigade forces swept up 20 “named targets” in a single raid. A few weeks earlier, members of the unit performed some thinking even more unthinkable when they first arrived.



PHOTOS BY KEVIN DOUGHERTY/Stars and Stripes

Above: Checking in with village elders is a critical component of any foot patrol in Afghanistan. They can tell a squad about troublemakers and what the desires of a community may be. On a recent patrol, Spc. Nick Barlow, left, Staff Sgt. Pat Keane and their translator chat in a Kabul neighborhood with a truck driver named Norallah, far right. Barlow and Keane are members of 6th Platoon, Company A, 151st Infantry Battalion of the Indiana National Guard. Right: Army Spc. Trevor Beaman and other members of his squad traverse an open field while on a foot patrol in a Kabul neighborhood.



Hoosiers on patrol: Keeping watch in Kabul

Indiana National Guard unit does 'a little bit of everything' on Afghan mission

BY KEVIN DOUGHERTY

Stars and Stripes

Ten minutes into the morning patrol Spc. Austin Wethington stumbled into a pit of urine while negotiating an icy alley running between two rows of mud houses.

The Afghan kids trailing the squad broke into a chorus of laughter.

Wethington couldn't help but chuckle himself as he withdrew his soiled leg.

Five minutes later, an Afghan child, who hadn't seen the soldier slip, called the 19-year-old from Plainfield, Ind., "Mr. America," as the squad passed by.

"He's fueling his ego," Spc. Trevor Beaman cracked.

Afghans' perceptions of U.S. forces can vary from moment to moment, which is why steady contact with locals is the best way to gain their trust. The most effective way to do that is to walk amongst them.

Wethington, Beaman and five other members of 6th Platoon, Company A, 151st Infantry Battalion of the Indiana National Guard recently went on a foot patrol through an area called Hudkhil in Kabul's northeast side. The neighborhood is a field away from Camp Phoenix, where the unit resides.

The other soldiers from the Hoosier state who took part in the 90-minute march were: Staff Sgt. Pat Keane, 34, of Decatur; Sgt. Jeremy Campbell, 26, of Pekin; Spc. Greg Gilbert, 24, of Anderson; Spc. Joe Pavulka, 21, of Laporte; and Spc. Nick Barlow, 20, of Fort Wayne. Campbell and Gilbert are combat medics, while Keane is the platoon sergeant, though, on this patrol, Barlow led the squad.

Every second or third day a soldier can

expect to go out on a foot patrol. In addition, they spend a lot of time on the road on convoy security or assisting a troop or unit in need. Soldiers also take their turn as members of a quick-reaction force.

"We do a little bit of everything," Keane said.

As they left the compound behind, the soldiers were seen off by the base mascot, Cherry, a local white mutt, which now calls Camp Phoenix home.

After Wethington's misstep, the patrol emerged from the alley and into a clearing before happening upon a village elder. Keane explained beforehand that elders

are often approached during a patrol and asked a few questions, such as the possible movement of anti-coalition fighters or living conditions.

"After seven months, [patrolling] can get old, but it's a new adventure every day."

Spc. Trevor Beaman

Member of 6th Platoon, Company A, 151st Infantry Battalion

ously concealing something.

For a moment Keane grows suspicious, until the squad's interpreter tells Keane it's a deceased child under the cover. The troops let them grieve in peace.

"Prior to the Americans coming," the bearded man said through an interpreter in response to a question about daily life, "we didn't have food to eat on a regular basis."

The next elder Keane looks to approach is cradling a brown blanket, obviously

Peace of a different kind soon comes to the patrol. The gaggle of kids that have been shadowing the GIs for the better part of 15 minutes finally decide they ventured far enough away from home and retreat.

The patrol sets out across a dormant dirt field. A different group of boys playing soccer on the far end approach as the patrol nears. For a few kicks, Beaman gets into the act. That delights the kids and a second posse forms.

Barlow's patrol aims itself down another narrow, irregular, frozen, dirt pathway dividing a group of homes. They look new, based on the condition of the outer mud walls. Keane pauses with the interpreter and inspects a hole at the base of a wall. It looks to be an electrical junction box in the making.

"That's a good sign," Keane said. Afghans' "main desire is to have electricity back in their villages."

The alley spills into a busy street that leads the troops to a road they crossed earlier. From there, the Hoosiers' hooch — and pooch — aren't far.

One more issue, however, demands their attention.

A man discreetly alerts the soldiers to a makeshift hash house along the road. Information is gathered, pictures are taken and the patrol resumes.

"He doesn't want it here," Barlow said. "He says the police won't do anything about it because the people who started it bought off the police."

Cherry waits for the patrol as they near a back gate of the camp, his tail wagging like crazy. The dog somehow got on top of a high wall laced with concertina wire.

"After seven months, [patrolling] can get old," Beaman said, "but it's a new adventure every day."



Cherry, the mascot at Camp Phoenix, greets soldiers from 6th Platoon, Company A, 151st Infantry Battalion of the Indiana National Guard upon return to their compound in Kabul, Afghanistan.

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Anti-tank platoon hunts Iraqi insurgents

Targeting system gives added edge to see in the dark

BY JASON CHUDY

Stars and Stripes

BAGHDAD

Soldiers of the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment's Anti-tank Platoon used to hunt armor, now they hunt armed insurgents.

And though the platoon has traded its missiles for machine guns, it has kept one component from their TOW launchers — the Improved Target Acquisition System.

The thermal imaging system allows the unit's gunners to see differences in temperatures between men, machinery and the environment, giving them an added edge in their hunt.

"It's designed to spot and engage tanks," said Sgt. David Schnabl, a squad leader with the platoon. "It has excellent optics for both night and day — it's pretty hard to miss (targets) with this thing."

The platoon has four Humvees with the targeting system, which is mounted on top of the vehicle and operated by the gunner. All of the platoon's 16 soldiers know how to use it.

Schnabl said they use it on nearly every patrol, usually when they set up in a dark area to watch road or pedestrian traffic.

When the patrol stopped to set up an observation post along the dark wall of a compound near the main highway Friday night, Spc. Mark Gonthier readied the system.

ITAS only works while the vehi-



JASON CHUDY/Stars and Stripes

Spc. Mark Gonthier sits in the gunner's position of his Humvee during an evening patrol Friday. The large unit to his front right is called the Improved Target Acquisition System, and is used to track vehicles for his TOW missiles, which aren't used in Iraq. Still, soldiers use the system's infrared capability to track people and vehicles when it's dark.

cle is stopped, so the soldiers will usually use the system for a relatively short part of their eight-hour main supply route security patrol.

Gonthier had the system working in seven minutes. Most of that time involved allowing the ITAS's optics to cool to a subfreezing temperature.

He scanned the nearby field and verified that there were no people in it.

For a nighttime operation such as this observation post, Gonthier can use the system's 48-times zoom; in its daylight mode it can zoom out to 24 times.

"I can see a couple of clicks (kilometers)," said Gonthier. "If it

wasn't so urban it would be a lot better. Our last (area of operation) was perfect ... (it) had hills where we could set up and they couldn't see us."

Though the platoon hasn't spotted any insurgents with the system yet, they have seen things that looked suspicious enough to warrant a closer look.

When two men were found digging in a roadside canal around 3 a.m. a few months back, the soldier watched and recorded everything they did. When the men loaded something they couldn't identify in their trunk, the soldiers decided to intercept the men and search the car.

What they found was that the men had been digging up a broken water pump to take it for repairs.

If the men had been digging up something familiar, such as a weapon, the soldiers might have been able to identify the item.

"(It's ideal) especially for guys on roofs," said Gonthier. "You can tell if they're holding a weapon and even if they've fired it." If they've fired a weapon the barrel will be warmer than that hasn't, so it will show up brighter on the ITAS.

"When you're looking through there you can look at a person and see all the features of this person and what they're wearing," said Gonthier. "With trees you can see the specific branches."

The system's night-vision capability gives everything a green glow, similar to the night-vision goggles that soldiers normally use. But the similar glow is all that the two have in common.

"All they're doing is increasing existing light," said Schnabl about the goggles. "This system sees heat signatures on everything. If someone is in a field all covered up with camouflage liner, with NODS you can't see him."

"With this system you can because the heat is trapped in there with him," he said.

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Iraqi translators risk lives to help coalition troops

BY OMAR SINAN

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Iman Hashim worked as a translator for U.S. dealing with her small town's local government council until insurgents broke into her family house last year and shot her to death as she lay in bed.

"She was young," her elderly mother said recently, her voice trembling. Remembering the way that her 24-year-old daughter's blood stained the sheet and pillow and even the walls, the mother, Sabihah Abdulmohsin, begins to cry.

Like many Iraqis who deal with Americans and other Westerners, those who work as interpreters face a dilemma — keep their jobs and live with threats of intimidation and death or give up their livelihood in a country where jobs are at a premium.

There are no hard numbers on how many translators have been killed by the insurgents since the U.S.-led occupation began in May 2003.

Their employers and families routinely refuse to provide information about such killings for fear of endangering families or other translators.

But since last November, rumors have swirled throughout the region where Hashim lived, the so-called "triangle of death" south of Baghdad, of bounties being offered for murders: \$1,000 for a policeman, \$2,000 for a member of the National Guard and \$10,000 for an Iraqi translator or journalist.

Many of the Iraqis working as interpreters are young women like Iman — knowledgeable of English in a country where language skills are valued.

Sometimes they support whole families on their salaries.

Iman's mother, 55 and wearing a veil when talking to a reporter, left her house in Mahmudiya, 25 miles south of Baghdad, and moved to live with her sister in Baghdad after her daughter's brutal slaying last year.

Abu Hassan, a 58-year-old father of three who works as a translator for U.S. forces in Baghdad, is fatalistic, believing that God alone can determine his destiny.

But he is sure that no insurgent will pay him a salary if he leaves his job.

"Those who are threatening us will not feed bread for my children if I quit," he said.

Beyond being targeted individually, interpreters who work for multinational

troops are also at risk because they often travel with military units on patrol or help them man dangerous checkpoints.

In November, for example, an Iraqi man who served as an interpreter was killed along with three British soldiers when a suicide driver blew up his vehicle at a checkpoint in a high-risk area just south of Baghdad.

Z. Mohammed
Former interpreter
for U.S. troops

postponed his wedding to travel with the troops, a British spokesman said.

Not everyone finds such risks worthwhile.

One interpreter who worked with U.S.

troops after the April 2003 fall of Baghdad, left his work in a hurry to join his family in a refugee camp, after receiving numerous threats.

"I quit after they accused me of being a spy and traitor, and kept sending me killing threats," said the man, who insisted on being identified only as Z. Mohammed. "I have a life to live outside Iraq."

But many who go to neighboring countries such as Jordan face problems finding work or affordable housing there — and they often have no right to settle permanently.

Thus, some Iraqis try to make small changes to protect themselves, keeping their jobs — but never forgetting the threat of violence.

One 22-year-old Iraqi who does translations and reports for a Canadian broadcaster in Baghdad, received an anonymous letter informing him, "You should stop doing that."

The man, who requested that he be identified only with his initials, N.H., went to live with a sister and stopped taking taxis after the threats.

Often, he walks down the street scanning the faces of those who pass by, looking for a possible attacker, he said.

"I kept thinking of the person who is going to kill me," he said.

"I quit after they accused me of being a spy and traitor, and kept sending me killing threats."

Lawyer: Graner verdict won't deter other case

By T.A. BADGER

The Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — Although observers had predicted that Spc. Charles Graner's conviction in the Abu Ghraib prison scandal would trigger plea deals from the other defendants, at least one soldier still intends to go to trial.

Paul Bergrin, a Newark, N.J., lawyer representing Sgt. Javah Davis said Sunday he still plans to argue that his client was obeying orders from higher-ranking officers and government agents to rough up detainees as a prelude to interrogation.

Lawyers for Graner offered that defense, but a military jury convicted him Friday of all five charges he faced and sentenced him Saturday to 10 years behind bars.

The panel needed less than five hours to reach its verdict in the first trial arising from the scandal at the Baghdad prison, ignited when graphic photographs were aired that showed Graner and other Army reservists brutalizing detainees.

"I just don't believe it was presented the way we're going to present it," said Bergrin, whose witness list includes Brig. Gen. Janis Karpinski, who then was in charge of

Abu Ghraib. "We are taking no prisoners, we are going in there as gladiators."

But retired Army lawyer Jeffrey Addicott said the Graner verdict should send lawyers for Davis and two other soldiers awaiting court-martial in the case scrambling to get the best deals they can.

"So far everyone that's been brought into court has either pled guilty or now has been found guilty," said Addicott, director of the Center for Terrorism Law at St. Mary's University in San Antonio. "So if [Davis] raises the defense of I was only following orders, I would predict he's going to get the same result."

Davis, whose trial is set to begin in early February, faces many of the same charges as Graner: conspiracy, assault and dereliction of duty for not protecting detainees. He also is charged with lying to investigators, and could get a maximum of eight years in prison if convicted on all counts.

The Roselle, N.J., man had admitted stepping on the fingers and toes of detainees, but he maintains that none of them was hurt.

Bergrin said Davis' case is far more winnable than Graner's because unlike Graner, Davis is not seen in the most shocking photos of physical maltreatment and sexual humiliation at Abu Ghraib.



An Iraqi polling officer reads information from an Iraqi passport to register a voter in Amman, Jordan, on Monday.

Hopeful expatriates begin registering for Iraq election

By JAMAL HALABY

The Associated Press

AMMAN, Jordan — Iraqi expatriates across the Mideast began registering on Monday for their country's first independent elections in 50 years, saying they hope the upcoming vote will restore normalcy in their war-embattled nation.

Fourteen countries across the globe with large Iraqi populations are registering absentee voters and allowing them to cast ballots in the Jan. 30 election that will choose an assembly to draft an Iraqi constitution. The vote, which is opposed by insurgents and some Sunnis who claim ongoing violence prevents many from participating, is the first since Saddam Hussein's government was toppled.

"The elections are the dream of all Iraqis and I hope it will lead to improving the situation and restoring security and stability and normal life in my country," said Iraqi construction worker Mahmoud al-Agha, 38, who has been living in Jordan for seven years.

Low turnout was recorded at registration centers across Syria, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates on Monday, the first of a seven-day registration period. The centers are supervised by the International Organization for Migration, a Geneva-based nongovernmental organization.

Hussein al-Furati, an Iraqi who heads a registration center at a district near the Syrian capital of Damascus, said turnout was "very low." But Luis Martinez-Betanzos, who heads IOM's Iraq voting office in Syria, said in a press release Monday that he expects high registration and voter turnout.

In Dubai, Nikola Baldwin, a media officer at the Dubai registration center, said that though turnout was low "as usual with the first day of registration," she expected it "to pick up as the week progresses, especially during the weekend."

A few Iraqis looked anxious and refused to talk or have their pictures taken at one center in Amman. Posters hung on the center's walls urged Iraqis to take part in the polls. "The future of Iraq has a voice. Your voice," beamed one poster, showing an Iraqi holding his country's flag and saying: "Wherever I am, my heart is with my country."

Twenty-three registration centers have been set up across Jordan, Syria and the United Arab Emirates, many of them in schools. Private security firms took the responsibility of vetting Iraqis seeking to register.

There are about 200,000 Iraqi eligible voters in Syria and some 70,000 in the Emirates. Up to 60 percent of the estimated 360,000 Iraqi expatriates in Jordan are eligible to vote, according to IOM.

Defense minister says Iran is bankrolling some candidates

By BASSEM MROUE

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Some of the candidates running this month's general elections are receiving money from Iran, the Iraqi defense minister alleged Monday. He added that U.S. and other multinational troops were still needed here to maintain security.

Defense Minister Hazem Shaalan, commenting on Al-Arabiya television, did not name any candidates who were purportedly receiving funds from the Iranians. He said candidates should draw their support from Iraqis rather than foreign countries.

The minister appeared with a sheaf of documents which he claimed contained the names of

candidates on the Iranian payroll and how much each had received.

In the first free elections in decades, Iraqis are scheduled to vote on Jan. 30 for a 275-member National Assembly that will choose a new government and write the country's new constitution.

Shiite Muslims, who make up about 60 percent of Iraq's 26 million people, strongly support the vote while Sunni Arabs, who make up 20 percent and have ruled the country for decades, are calling for postponing elections until foreign troops withdraw. Some Shiite candidates are known to have close links with Iran, a Shiite-dominated country.

A Sunni clerical group, the Association of Muslim Scholars, has

called for setting a time table for foreign troops to withdraw in order for Sunnis to participate in elections.

But Shaalan said the troop presence was necessary at the moment because some neighboring countries might try to fill the power vacuum if the Americans and their partners left.

"The calls of people who want multinational forces to leave Iraq or ask for a timetable for their withdrawal means that the multinational forces leave so that Iran or Syria or other country enter," he said.

"This is not right. We need these forces to stay... at least for now until the security situation is stable and we have a strong army that can protect the people and the nation," said Shaalan, who is a strong critic of Syria and Iran.

Whether votes count or not, Iraqi sets up own polling place in Egypt

By SALAH NASRAWI

The Associated Press

CAIRO, Egypt — Once exiled and stripped of his Iraqi citizenship, Talib Muraud now sees hope in his country's new democratic process.

He is so eager to take part in this month's election for an Iraqi Assembly, in fact, that he has set up his own polling station after realizing that Egypt, where he lives, was not one of the 14 countries designated for expatriate voting.

"I have waited so long for this moment to come but when it came, I felt all frustration and despair," he said of his unsuccessful efforts to persuade the International Organization for Migration to include Egypt in its expatriate voting program.

Still hopeful that his vote can make a difference, Muraud and other fellow exiles have campaigned — through direct contacts and the Internet — to draw voters from Egypt's 6,000-strong Iraqi community to his polling station in an old office of the now-defunct Iraqi News Agency.

"The election to me means that my family's tragedy should not be repeated. That can only be prevented if we have a democratically elected government," he said.

Muraud is a member of the small Fali minority that was forced from Iraq after Saddam Hussein

ordered the mass expulsion of Iraqi Shiite Kurds, denouncing them as alien Persians. Muraud was stripped of his citizenship and has spent more than 30 years in exile.

Iraqi expatriates can vote if they live in one of the 14 countries selected by the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq.

The IOM expects about 1 million votes from the 14 designated countries: Australia, Britain, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Iran, Jordan, the Netherlands, Sweden, Syria, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and the United States.

On Monday, registration began in those countries — and at Muraud's Voluntary Iraqi Electoral Committee offices in downtown Cairo.

"They cannot exile us," said fellow campaigner Zaim al-Kharrarah. "Voting is our legitimate right to help in rebuilding our devastated country."

But Monique De Groot, a spokesman for the International Organization for Migration, said election organizers will not recognize the results coming from undesignated countries. The IOM, a Geneva-based nongovernmental organization, is supervising the out-of-country vote program.

She said the Iraqi election body chose the 14 countries because they have large Iraqi communities, and that the IOM was unaware of independent polling stations like Muraud's.

"I have waited so long for this moment to come but when it came it was all frustration and despair."

Talib Muraud

IN THE WORLD

Spanish judge indicts 8 in 9/11 attacks

BY CIARAN GILES

The Associated Press

MADRID, Spain — A Spanish judge indicted eight people on terrorism charges Monday, saying they provided logistical help and false documents for suspects in the Sept. 11 attacks.

The indictment was released by Spain's leading probe investigator, Judge Baltasar Garçon.

It said the eight had provided logistics and counterfeit documents for suspects including Ramzi Bin alshubh, an alleged would-be Sept. 11, 2001, hijacker who has been in U.S. custody since his

2002 capture in Pakistan. He is believed to have been the main contact between a group of Sept. 11 attackers in Hamburg, Germany, and Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network.

Bin alshubh, who could not get into the attacks but served as a key money man, reportedly is in U.S. custody at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The eight indicted suspects were identified as Abdel Zerrouq, Redouane Zenini, Samir Mahdjoub, Mohamed Ayat, Hedi Ben Youssef, Boudhiba, Khalel Madani, Tahir Ezrouali and Spaniard Francisco Garcia Gomez.

Garzon said they developed a "network of forged documents to provide false identities or fake documents to other members of the network to help them move about, flee or hide or (to help) with their terrorist activities or links with organizations such as Ansar al-Islam, under the orders of Abu Musab al Zarqawi." The latter is a Jordanian-born militant blamed for spearheading terrorist attacks in Iraq.

Garzon issued an international arrest order for Boudhiba and Ezrouali and ordered the Spaniard's release on \$26,000 bail. The

others are jailed in Spain after their arrests between February and June.

Garzon said Boudhiba is in jail in Britain. He said Boudhiba traveled from Hamburg to Istanbul, Turkey, on Sept. 3, 2001, along with a man named Ahmed Taleb, a member of the Hamburg cell blamed for carrying out the Sept. 11 attacks. The alleged leader of the cell was suspected suicide pilot Mohamed Atta.

Investigators said Spain, along with Germany, was a major staging ground for the Sept. 11 attacks.

Bin alshubh and Atta met in the

northeastern Spanish region of Tarragona in July 2001, when Garzon says last-minute details of the attacks were decided, including the date.

In September 2003, Garzon indicted 35 members of an alleged Spain-based al-Qaida cell and bin Laden as the mastermind of Sept. 11 on grounds that the attacks were planned in part in Spain.

Garzon later broadened the indictment to 40 people. Twenty-one of them are scheduled to go on trial on charges of terrorism over the next few weeks, although not all of them are charged with helping prepare the Sept. 11 attacks.

Abbas ordering forces to stop attacks on Israel

BY LARA SUKHITAN

The Associated Press

RAMALLAH, West Bank — Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas ordered his security forces Monday to try to prevent attacks against Israel and to investigate a shooting at a Gaza Strip crossing that killed six Israeli civilians last week.

However, Palestinian officials would not provide details of the order, and it was unclear how it would be translated into action, if at all. Abbas insists he will use persuasion, not force, to rein in armed groups.

A Hamas spokesman said the Islamic militant group will continue carrying out attacks.

Abbas was under growing pressure to move against militants following last week's attack at the Karni crossing between Gaza and Israel. Israel suspended ties with Abbas in response and ordered its army Sunday to do whatever was needed to stop Palestinian attacks.

But Israel decided to hold off on a major military offensive in Gaza to give Abbas more time to act against militants, a senior government official said Monday.

Secretary of State Colin Powell also urged Abbas in a phone call Sunday to rein in the armed groups, officials said.

Abbas' victory in presidential election last week had raised hopes for a breakthrough in Mid-

east peacemaking. However, the Karni attack, two days before Abbas was sworn into office, ended his honeymoon with Israel before it ever started.

Israeli troops raided several areas of Gaza over the weekend to halt rocket fire on Israeli settlements and border towns, withdrawing early Monday. Sixteen Palestinians were killed in the raids, among them nine gunmen and seven civilians, including a 10-year-old boy.

A senior Israeli military official said Monday the army will re-enter areas of the West Bank it is slated to evacuate later this year if Palestinian security forces cannot prevent attacks from the area. The remarks by the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, indicated that Israel's planned withdrawal from the northern West Bank this summer might not be permanent.

In a Palestinian Cabinet meeting Monday, Abbas instructed the security forces to try to prevent attacks against Israel.

"A decision was taken that we will handle our obligation to stop violence against Israelis any where," Cabinet minister Saeb Erekat said.

Abbas moved up his planned negotiations with militants.

Ministers said he would travel to Gaza for talks with various factions Tuesday, instead of Wednesday, as initially scheduled.

Associated Press reporter Laurie Copans in Jerusalem contributed to this report.



An injured passenger is carried out of the Cultural Center station Monday after a subway train slammed into another one in Bangkok, Thailand. The accident, which occurred during morning rush hour, injured more than 200 people, six months after the subway system opened in the Thai capital. After the accident, service has been suspended for a week at all 21 stations in the subway system.

At least 200 hurt in Thai train crash

The Associated Press

BANGKOK, Thailand — Service on Bangkok's 6-month-old subway system was suspended for a week after more than 200 people were injured when an empty train crashed into one full of passengers during Monday morning's rush hour.

Phraphat Jongsanguan, head of the Mass Rapid Transit Authority, the operator of the underground train system, pinned the blame on human error. "Procedures were not followed and that is what caused the accident," he said.

At a news conference, he and Transport Minister Suriya Jungnrungruekij described how workers,

after disabling an automatic braking system, lost control of a train being taken out of service, which then slid down a sloped area of track in less than a minute into another, occupied train.

Lights in the parked train at the Thai Cultural Center station went out as passengers inside were tossed about. But the doors quickly opened to allow their exit.

Some of the victims were bleeding as rescue workers carried them up the station's stairs to ambulances. Others, dazed and crying, were helped up the stairs to the street. Worarak Kulitusk, 28, an office worker hurt slightly on a hand and shin, said he was on the train when, "all of a sudden I just heard a large boom," and the lights inside the car went out.

Brits urge wealthy nations to forgive Africa debt

The Associated Press

CAPE TOWN, South Africa — British Treasury chief Gordon Brown on Monday called on wealthy nations and international financial institutions to write off Africa's debt, saying debts incurred by past generations are keeping the continent poor.

Brown wants rich nations to set a timetable for increasing development aid and for more countries to sign on to the International Finance Facility — an initiative intended to double rich countries' aid to Af-

rica from the current level of \$50 billion a year. He also said that dozens of African countries will make debt payments over the next decade.

Brown, speaking at the opening of a meeting between 19 African finance ministers and their British and Canadian counterparts, said the extra money would go to helping poor nations meet the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals of halving poverty by 2015, boosting the fight against AIDS and educating some 100 million children not now in school.

2 sailors dead, 6 others missing from ship

ATHENS, Greece — Two sailors were killed and six others were missing Monday after a North Korean flagged cargo ship sank in the eastern Aegean Sea as storms battered Greece, disrupting flights and causing power failures.

The Merchant Marine Ministry said three sailors of the Lady O ship were rescued by helicopter and a nearby vessel. Two of the survivors were hospitalized on the nearby island of Chios and were in good condition.

The crewmembers included nine men from Egypt and two from Lebanon, the ministry said, but had no other details. Two dead bodies were found in a life raft.

The Lady O was carrying 807 tons from the central Greek port of Halkida to Istanbul, Turkey.

The rescue effort, aided early Monday by helicopters and vessels from neighboring Turkey, was hampered by high winds.

From The Associated Press

Wolfowitz: U.S. military's relief work in Sri Lanka may end soon

BY TINI TRAN

The Associated Press

GALLE, Sri Lanka — U.S. Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz said Monday that Sri Lanka is moving swiftly from relief to reconstruction three weeks after a devastating tsunami and help from U.S. military engineers will not be needed much longer.

In Indonesia, the United Nations banned its staff from traveling between the hard-hit provincial capital of Banda Aceh to the east Sumatran city of Medan because of reported fighting between the military and separatist rebels in the tsunami-battered area, a U.N. spokesman said.

Also Monday, the Indonesian military and the top U.N. official in Aceh province said they had no information of a specific threat to aid workers in Indonesia, despite a warning Monday from Denmark of an "imminent terror attack."

An insurgent commander told The Associated Press that rebels will not attack foreign aid workers because the groups have been helping disaster victims.

After visiting a battered area on Sri Lanka's southern coast, Wolfowitz said he was "impressed by how resilient

people are" and then met the country's leaders to see what more America can do.

He said cooperation by Tamil rebels in the relief efforts was "probably a good sign," and hoped the catastrophe shared by the feuding ethnic groups would help spur peace efforts.

"When people face a disaster of this kind and see help coming from their government and help coming from outside, hopefully they realize on all sides that the stakes for which they are fighting are relatively trivial in comparison," he said.

From a helicopter, Wolfowitz surveyed rubble-lined beaches where about 700 U.S. Marines are helping to clear debris and rebuild. So far, the U.S. government has sent \$38 million to the island in emergency aid.

Wolfowitz said Sri Lanka was further along than Indonesia in starting to rebuild, and the U.S. military may soon leave.

"We don't want to stay any longer than we are really needed," Wolfowitz said. "I think the need for this kind of military support is going away quite quickly."

Earlier, U.S. Marine Lt. Gen. Robert Blackburn, who is coordinating Ameri-

can relief efforts in South Asia, said he expected the U.S. military to wind down operations in Thailand and Sri Lanka in the next two weeks.

Relief efforts are being led by nearly 15,000 U.S. troops — most of whom are docked off the coast of western Sumatra Island.

Australia, Singapore, Germany and other nations also have contributed troops.

Japan was preparing its biggest-ever overseas military relief effort, a mission involving 1,000 troops expected to arrive soon in their first deployment to Indonesia since World War II.

On Sunday, Jakarta backed away from an earlier call for troops to be out of Indonesia by March 26.

One contingent of U.S. troops went to the eastern part of Sri Lanka near the town of Ampara, an area where control is divided between the army and Tamil Tiger guerrillas.

"We're all coming together to help all Sri Lankans, regardless of what ethnic group they're from or what area of the country they live in," U.S. Ambassador Jeffrey Lunsford said.

About 65,000 people were killed in the 20-year ethnic war between the Tamil rebels and the Sinhalese-dominated government until a cease-fire in 2002.



U.S. Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, center, walks through the debris Monday as he visits a school destroyed by the Dec. 26 tsunami in Gintola, southern Sri Lanka. Before meeting the country's leaders to discuss what more America would do, Wolfowitz told students and teachers that the whole world was eager to help.

Mesic to stay on as Croat president

The Associated Press

ZAGREB, Croatia — Croatia's President Stipe Mesic was back at work on Monday, the morning after overwhelmingly winning a second term in a runoff election and promising to align this ex-Yugoslav country more closely with the West.

Mesic, 70, won 66 percent of the vote Sunday, the state-run Electoral Commission said after nearly all votes were counted.

His conservative rival, the Cabinet minister in charge of families and war veterans, Jadranka Kosor, garnered 34 percent.

Croatian newspapers called the vote "Mesic's triumph."

Croatia, which gained independence only 13 years ago, "has passed a long way in building its democracy and ... that's why we're now before the door of the European Union," Mesic said.

He also offered a conciliatory hand to the governing Croatian Democratic Union, saying, "we have to be united" in efforts to make Croatia an EU member.

The result gives Mesic a mandate until late 2009, when the nation of 4.5 million people hopes to join the European Union. He is to be sworn in next month, when his current term expires.

It also is a blow to Prime Minister Ivo Sanader's party, which returned to power a year ago, and could indicate a trend ahead of local elections in the spring. Mesic was backed by eight opposition parties, as well as minority groups.



An unidentified doctor handles Eliza Maria, daughter of 66-year-old Romanian Adriana Ilescu, in an intensive care unit at the Giulesti Maternity Hospital in Bucharest on Monday. Doctors said the mother is the world's oldest recorded woman to give birth.

At 66, Romanian is oldest to give birth

The Associated Press

BUCHAREST, Romania — Doctors said a 66-year-old Romanian woman became the world's oldest woman recorded to give birth when she delivered a daughter by Caesarean section. The child's twin sister was stillborn, they said.

Romanian doctors at the Giulesti Maternity Hospital in Bucharest said Adriana Ilescu, who was artificially inseminated, delivered her daughter — Eliza Maria — early Sunday.

The child was born more than six weeks short of a full 40-week pregnancy term, a hospital spokeswoman said. The girl

weighed just 3.19 pounds, less than half the weight of an average newborn, and was in the intensive care unit but breathing on her own, the spokeswoman said.

Late Sunday, the baby had her first meal — a few drops of glucose.

"We are happy that the mother and child are normal and we hope this will continue," said Dr. Bogdan Marinescu, who runs the hospital.

Doctors performed the emergency Caesarean section after the smaller of Ilescu's twins died in the womb, the spokeswoman said.

That child weighed just 1.54 pounds, she said.

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U.N. mission depends on promises kept

Report: Developing nations need support pledged by U.S., other rich countries

BY EDITH M. LEDERER
The Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — In the coming decade, more than 500 million people can escape from poverty and tens of millions can avoid certain death if the United States, Japan and other rich countries keep their promises to vastly increase development aid to the world's poorest countries, a U.N.-sponsored report said Monday.

The report spells out the investments needed to meet U.N. goals adopted by world leaders at the Millennium Summit in 2000 to tackle poverty, hunger and disease mainly in African and Asian countries where 1 billion people live on a dollar a day and less and 1.8 billion more live on just \$2 a day.

"The system is not working right now — let's be clear," said Professor Jeffrey Sachs, head of the U.N. anti-poverty effort and lead author of the report. "There's a tremendous imbalance of focus on the issues of war and

peace, and less on the dying and suffering of the poor who have no voice."

"The overwhelming reality on our planet is that impoverished people get sick and die for lack of access to basic practical means that could help keep them alive and do more than that — help them achieve livelihoods and escape from poverty," said Sachs, who heads the Earth Institute at Columbia University.

As an example, he said, providing nets to cover beds and keep out mosquitoes in impoverished African and Asian countries could save the lives of a million children this year who otherwise will die from malaria.

"We have the world's eyes focused on the tsunami of the Indian Ocean, but the world continues to overlook the silent tsunamis of deaths from malaria, which take every month the number of people that died in the Asian tragedy," Sachs said. "Every month, 150,000 children in Africa, if not more, are dying from the silent tsunami

of malaria, a largely preventable and utterly treatable disease."

Sachs was appointed by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 2002 to head the Millennium Project and develop a plan to meet the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. Annan is expected to use the report to help prepare his own recommendations to world leaders who will be attending a follow-up summit in September that will also tackle U.N. reform.

The 3,000-page report by a team of 265 experts, "Investing in Development," said the poorest countries don't have the resources to meet the goals. They include halving the number of people living on a dollar a day and halving the number of people without access to clean water and basic sanitation.

But the resources needed to meet the goals are within the means of the world's richest nations and their \$30 trillion economy — \$12 trillion just in the United States, Sachs said.

In 1970, the world's nations agreed to provide 0.7 percent of their gross national income for development assistance. So far, only five countries have met or surpassed the target — Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. Six others have made commitments to reach the target by 2015 — Belgium, Finland, France, Ireland, Spain and Britain — and the report urged all developed countries to set similar timetables.

The United States right now only spends about 0.15 percent of its GDP on development aid, though President Bush has increased the amount. If the millennium goals are achieved by 2015, "more than 500 million people will be lifted out of extreme poverty. More than 300 million will no longer suffer from hunger... Hundreds of millions more women and girls will go to school," it said. "If the goals are not met, millions will die who would otherwise live."

Panel says WTO members should change some rules

The Associated Press

GENEVA — World Trade Organization members should consider overhauling the way they hold negotiations in the body that sets the rules of global commerce, a panel of leading experts said Monday.

The study, commissioned by WTO Director-General Supachai Panitchpakdi, also raised concerns that a proliferation of regional trading blocs — including the North American Free Trade Agreement, the European Union and South America's Mercosur — as well as deals between individual nations are undermining progress on a global trade liberalization accord.

Supachai commissioned the report in 2003. The eight-member independent panel that wrote it was led by Peter Sutherland, first head of the WTO when it was created in 1995 out of the looser General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, or GATT.

The panel was composed largely of key academics from countries, ranging from Ghana to the United States.

The 148-nation WTO is at a crucial stage in its short history, Supachai noted.

The past decade was marked by the high-profile collapse of its ministerial meeting in Seattle in 1999 and the start of sometimes violent street protests by the burgeoning anti-globalization movement.

The failure in Seattle was followed by a successful accord on launching global trade liberalization talks at Doha, Qatar, in 2001. But member governments were unable to spur those talks two years later at a meeting in Cancun, Mexico, largely because of clashes over farm-trade concessions.

WTO members currently make decisions by consensus — in theory giving the biggest, richest and the smallest, poorest members the same power. But the report said the consensus approach is overused, even in purely procedural matters.

The report urged the WTO's ruling General Council to adapt the rules so that "a member blocking a measure which otherwise has very broad consensus support shall only block such consensus if it declares in writing, with reasons included, that the matter is one of vital national interest to it."

Taking their message to the street



Italians who bought bonds issued by Argentina and consumer advocates hold signs and wave flags Monday at a protest outside the Italian Parliament's Lower Chamber in Rome. Some 685,000 Italians are trying to recover money they lost since 2001 by investing money in bonds and other financial products issued by Argentina and by bankrupt food giants Cirio Spa and Parmalat Spa.

Thailand to broadcast from prison as deterrent to crime

The Associated Press

BANGKOK, Thailand — Thai land officials said Monday it will make live Internet broadcasts of life behind prison walls — including convicts' last moments before execution — in a bid to deter lawbreakers, especially a burgeoning number of drug dealers.

Though no date has been fixed to begin the Web broadcasts, cameras have already been installed at Bangkok's maximum security prison on the outskirts of Bangkok, which houses more than 2,000 inmates. Nearly 1,000 are sentenced to death, and 65 are awaiting execution with no appeals pending.

"From now on people can see life in prison through the Internet," said Corrections Department chief Nattchai Chitsawang.

The broadcasts will show the inmates' daily lives as well as images of condemned men as they are taken from their cells to be executed, he said.

"The Internet will show how we treat the convicts in their last minutes, including the preparation process, but at the time of execution, the viewer will be allowed to see only part of the process," Nattchai said.

Amnesty International Thailand opposed the broadcast proposal and urged the Corrections Department to review the plan.

British woman sentenced to 5 years for drugging, robbing wealthy men

BY SUE LEEMAN
The Associated Press

LONDON — A woman who used the date-rape drug Rohypnol to drug wealthy men and rob them of their expensive clothes and accessories was jailed for five years Monday.

Selina Hakki, who went to nightclubs and used the lure of sex to secure invitations to the men's homes, where she spent their drinks, is believed to be the first woman to be found guilty of using Rohypnol to drug men in Britain.

"I have no doubt that you committed a very serious offense for gain," Judge Henry Blacksell told the sobbing 37-year-old mother of two from east London.

"They demonstrated a degree of planning, sophistication and controlling behavior."

"It was not for company that you were in those places when you happened upon these particular victims. It was, in my judgment, for the purpose of using them as victims as you went on and on."

Prosecutors told the court that Hakki picked her prey by their designer clothes and expensive watches.

Once in their plush apartments, she drugged them and made off with clothes, shoes and watches.

Hakki pleaded not guilty to two charges of using a stupefying drug to commit an offense and two charges of theft, but she refused to give evidence in her defense.

Banker Volker Volger, 38, and film producer Alexander Jovy, 34, told jurors they woke up dazed and confused after Hakki spiked their glasses of red wine.

Volger said he was celebrating his birthday at a five-star hotel when he met Hakki and took her home to his apartment in the exclusive suburb Knightsbridge.

He woke to find clothes, shoes, an expensive watch and Tiffany & Co. brand alarm clock missing.

The judge said he would not forget hearing Jovy had pleaded for the return of the Rolex, bought for him by his late father.

"Hakki had to give evidence in full glare of publicity about a difficult time in their lives brought about by you administering this drug," Blacksell said.

IN THE STATES

Report: U.S. conducting secret missions in Iran

Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON — Since at least last summer, the United States has conducted "secret reconnaissance missions" inside Iran in an effort to identify three dozen or more suspected nuclear, chemical and missile sites that could be destroyed with airstrikes and commando raids, according to a report Sunday in *The New Yorker* magazine.

The existence of the missions, described in an article by veteran journalist Seymour M. Hersh, was not attributed to any source or document.

Hersh's article quoted an unnamed government consultant with close ties to the Pentagon saying, "The civilians in the Pentagon want to go into Iran and destroy as much of the military infrastructure as possible."

A senior White House aide — without citing any specific point of contention — de-

Pentagon denies claim, says article is 'riddled with errors of fundamental fact'

nounced the article in a televised interview.

"I've seen excerpts of this story," said White House spokesman Dan Bartlett, appearing on CNN's "Late Edition." "I think it's riddled with inaccuracies, and I don't believe that some of the conclusions he's drawing there are based on fact."

In a statement made Monday, Pentagon spokesman Lawrence Di Rita said the article is "riddled with errors of fundamental fact," and denies that high-level meetings Hersh reports in the article ever happened.

The article "reflects poorly on Mr. Hersh and 'The New Yorker,'" Di Rita said.

Bartlett said President Bush is using diplomacy to persuade the Iranian regime

not to develop or acquire any weapons of mass destruction.

"We're working with our European allies to help convince the Iranian government to not pursue weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons," Bartlett said. "It's critical that the entire world focus on this issue. It is a threat that we have to take seriously."

Speculation about Bush's intentions toward Iran is likely to heighten as his administration enters its second term this week. In his State of the Union address three years ago, Bush alleged that Iran, along with North Korea and Iraq, formed an "axis of evil, aiming to threaten the peace of the world."

Bush, in that speech, said Iran was "ag-

gressively" pursuing weapons of mass destruction while exporting terrorism.

Leaders of the Iranian government have said the nation has been interested only in developing nuclear power to generate electricity. On Nov. 14, Iran announced that it would suspend all aspects of its uranium-enrichment program in exchange for incentives offered by European nations on trade and peaceful nuclear technology.

The next day the International Atomic Energy Agency said its inspectors had uncovered no new evidence of concealed nuclear activities or an atomic weapons program in Iran.

In Tehran on Sunday, a spokesman for the Foreign Ministry told *The Associated Press* that environmental samples taken from a military complex over the weekend by U.N. nuclear inspectors would prove that Iran's program is for peaceful purposes and not the making of weapons. *Stripes* Washington editor Patrick Dickson contributed to this report.

Poll: Americans hopeful about Bush's second term

BY WILL LESTER

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A majority of Americans say they feel hopeful about President Bush's second term.

and have a generally positive view of him personally, but they also express continued doubts about Iraq.

People were most likely to identify Iraq as the top priority for Bush, an Associated Press poll found. But more than half wondered whether a stable government can be established there.

After winning re-election, Bush is preparing to pursue an ambitious agenda that includes efforts to change Social Security, federal tax laws and medical malpractice awards.

Ahead of Bush's inauguration on Thursday, six in 10 people said they felt hopeful about his second term and in response to a separate question 47 percent said they were worried. Most said they

were neither angry nor excited about his final four years in office.

Iraq was cited most often as the president's highest priority, according to the poll conducted for the AP by Ipsos-Public Affairs.

Some 53 percent of those questioned said it is unlikely Iraq will have a stable government.

"Iraq remains the kind of thing that could completely take over the term, if the situation gets a lot worse," said Charles Franklin, a political scientist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. "It's a good idea for the president to push new domestic proposals. He has to find a way to have the whole second term be about more than just Iraq."

More than 1,350 U.S. troops have died in Iraq. Deadly attacks by insurgents are on the rise as the Jan. 30 elections near.

"It's best to be hopeful about the next four years," said Kellie Shanahan, a Republican and a teacher from Wilmington, N.C. "If we're not, it won't be good for our country."

Public perceptions of the president's personal strengths are his biggest asset today.

Nearly two-thirds of those polled described Bush as likable, strong and intelligent. A majority said he is dependable and honest.



Bush



Thousands at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta commemorated the Martin Luther King holiday on Monday. Participating are, from left back row, Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., the Rev. Bernice Albertine King, Martin Luther King III, the Rev. Suzan D. Johnson Cook and Coretta Scott King; and, in front from left, Cantor Kimberly Goodfriend and Laura Elizabeth Robinson. They said "We Shall Overcome."

Atlanta celebrates MLK; son cites a legacy of peace and compassion

BY LOUISE CHU

The Associated Press

ATLANTA — If he were alive now, Martin Luther King would be reacting to the sobering news emanating from overseas with a message of peace and compassion, his son said Monday.

A commemorative service marked the King holiday at Ebenezer Baptist Church, where King was preacher from 1960 until his assassination in 1968 at age 39. Thousands of people were expected to take part in an afternoon

rally and march through downtown Atlanta.

Martin Luther King III asked the congregation to remember his father's legacy of peace as America wages war in Iraq, and to remember his message of compassion in light of the tsunami disaster.

"Let us respond to this challenge by reaching out to help our sisters and brothers who are suffering because of the tsunami," he said.

Republican Sen. Saxby Chambliss told the crowd at Ebenezer Baptist that the country is better off because of King's work.

"The dream of Dr. King will not be fulfilled until everyone who is uneducated is educated, everyone who is homeless has a roof over their head, and all who are hungry become fed," Chambliss

said.

Rep. John Lewis, a Democrat, said King would have opposed the war in Iraq.

"I believe he would be saying today, 'End the war, end the war in Iraq,'" Lewis said. "Bring our young men and our young women home."

King, born in Atlanta Jan. 15, 1929, would have turned 76 on Saturday.

In Washington, President Bush planned to attend an event honoring King at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

"Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a visionary American and a dedicated leader who believed deeply in liberty and dignity for every person," Bush said in a holiday proclamation. "His faith and courage continue to inspire America and the world."

Coast Guard searches for missing fisherman

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Two fishermen were killed and four others were missing in the choppy Bering Sea after two separate accidents on the opening day of the dangerous snow crab season.

The 92-foot Big Valley and the 134-foot Sultan went out after snow crab amid stormy seas and up to 40 mph winds. The Kodiak-based Big Valley sank Saturday 70 miles west of St. Paul Island, about 750 miles west of Anchorage.

At least 34 whales die on N. Carolina beach

MANTOPE, N.C. — Scientists and National Park Service workers were working to collect samples and clean up whale carcasses after 34 of the marine mammals beached themselves and either died or had to be euthanized.

Dozens of whales beached themselves early Saturday along a five-mile stretch of coastline near Oregon Inlet, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said.

From The Associated Press

OPINION

A nation full of faith and religious illiterates

BY STEPHEN PROTHERO

The sociologist Peter Berger once remarked that if India is the most religious country in the world and Sweden the least, then the United States is a nation of Indians ruled by Swedes. Not anymore.

With a Jesus lover in the Oval Office and a faith-based party in control of both houses of Congress, the United States is undeniably a nation of believers ruled by the same.

Things are different in Europe, and not just in Sweden. The Dutch are four times less likely than Americans to believe in miracles, hell and biblical inerrancy. The euro does not trust in God. But here is the paradox: Although Americans are far more religious than Europeans, they know far less about religion.

In Europe, religious education is the rule from the elementary grades on. So Austrians, Norwegians and the Irish can tell you about the Seven Deadly Sins or the Five Pillars of Islam. But, according to a 1997 poll, only 1 out of 3 U.S. citizens is able to name the most basic of Christian texts, the four Gospels, and 12 percent think Noah's wife was Joan of Arc. That paints a picture of a nation that believes God speaks in Scripture but that can't be bothered to read what he has to say.

U.S. Catholics, evangelicals and Jews have been lamenting for some time a crisis of religious literacy in their ranks. But the dangers of religious ignorance are by no means confined to those worried about catechizing their children or cultivating the next generation of clergy.

When Americans debated slavery, almost exclusively on the basis of the Bible, people of all races and classes could follow the debate. They could make sense of its references to the runaway slave in the New Testament and of Pauline letters to the yearning slave, when slaves could be freed, in the Old

Testament book of Leviticus. Today it is a rare American who can engage with any sophistication in biblically inflected arguments about gay marriage, abortion or stem cell research.

Since Sept. 11, 2001, President Bush has been telling us that "Islam is a religion of peace," while evangelist Franklin Graham (Billy's son) has insisted otherwise. Who is right? Americans have no way to tell because they know virtually nothing about Islam. Such ignorance imperils our public life, putting citizens in the thrall of talking heads.

How did this happen? How did one of the most religious nations in the world become a nation of religious illiterates? Religious congregations are surely at fault. Churches and synagogues that once inculcated the "fourth R" are now telling the faithful stories "ripped from the headlines" rather than teaching them the Ten Commandments or parsing the Sermon on the Mount (which was delivered, as only 1 in 3 Americans can tell you, by Jesus). But most of the fault lies in our elementary and secondary schools.

In a majority opinion in a 1963 church-state case (Abington vs. Schempp), Supreme Court Justice Tom Clark wrote, "It might well be said that one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion ... and its relationship to the advance of civilization." If so, the education of nearly every public school student in the nation is woefully inadequate.

Because of misunderstandings about the First Amendment, religious studies are seldom taught in public schools. When they are, instruction typically begins only in high school with teachers not trained in the subtle distinction between teaching religion (unconstitutional) and teaching about religion (essential).

Though state educational standards no longer ignore religion as they did a decade ago, coverage of religion in history and so-



cial science textbooks is spotty at best. Charles Hoxby, senior scholar at the First Amendment Center in Virginia, said: "It is as if we got freedom of religion in 1791 and then we were free from religion after that."

Now that the religious right has triumphed over the secular left, every politician seems determined to get religion. They're all asking "What Would Jesus Do?" — about the war in Iraq, gay marriage, poverty and Social Security. And though the ACLU may rage, it is not un-American to bring religious reasoning into our public debates. In fact, that has been happening ever since George Washington put his hand on a Bible and swore to uphold the Constitution.

What is un-American is to give those debates over to televangelists of either the sec-

ular or the religious variety, to absent ourselves from the discussion by ignorance.

A few days after Sept. 11, a turbaned Indian-American man was shot and killed in Arizona by a bigot who believed the man's dress marked him as a Muslim. But what killed Balbir Singh Sodhi (who was not a Muslim but a Sikh) was not so much bigotry as ignorance. The moral of his story is not just that we need more tolerance. It is that Americans — of both the religious and the secular variety — need to understand religion. Resolving in 2005 to read for yourself either the Bible or the Quran (or both) might not be a bad place to start.

Stephen Prothero teaches at Boston University and is author of "American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon." This column first appeared in the Los Angeles Times.

Delaying election would turn back the clock in Iraq

BY KARIM KHUTAR ALMUSAWI

With only a little more than two weeks to go before Jan. 30, there are still some people who want to postpone the Iraqi elections. But that would be a terrible mistake.

For one thing, the Iraqi people are longing for democracy after decades of dictatorship and oppression, and they are not inclined to wait much longer. This was confirmed by a survey conducted by the International Republican Institute in December, showing that 67.4 percent of Iraqis support going forward with the elections as scheduled. According to Iraq's independent election commission, 7471 candidates representing 75 political entities, 27 organizations and nine coalitions — plan to participate in the national assembly elections.

Don't be fooled by propagandists: This election process — to create a transitional national assembly that will begin to build durable democratic institutions and draft a constitution — is for the benefit of all. No effort has been made by authorities to stop anyone from participating, so there is no "Sunni crisis" as some people are suggesting.

Simply speaking, the new Iraq will be for all Iraqis and not for any one particular group, faction or religion. It will represent all the Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen and Assyrians, and any other minorities or religions.

No one wants injustice or inequality except the terrorists. That was the old policy under the racist regime of Saddam Hussein — a policy that led to mass graves all over the country — and the terrorists today would like to re-create it.

You have to ask yourself whose interest is served by the call to postpone the elections, despite the intense efforts of the independent electoral commission, despite the support of the main Iraqi parties and institutions, despite the clear desire of friendly nations and the United Nations to have the elections held on time. Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani's representative said on Dec. 31: "The issue of the election in Iraq is a decisive matter for all Iraqis. There is a consensus on holding it. Any attempt to postpone it means causing an unimaginable crisis."

And what is to be gained by putting off the election? The deteriorating security conditions won't vanish within the coming weeks

or months, even after the elections. In fact, holding elections and putting a popular, legitimate, democratic government in place is the best way to help stabilize and secure the country — not the other way around.

Some have suggested calling a "reconciliation convention" before the election is held. But reconciliation has been reached already; the only ones outside the circle are the Baathists. And reconciling with the Baathists is out of the question. It is not only against the interest of the Kurds and Shiites to reconcile with the Baathists, but it is against the interest of most Sunnis as well.

The call by some for a boycott of the elections as long as our nation remains occupied

is also misguided. The reality of the matter is that the multinational forces in Iraq are an absolute necessity for the moment.

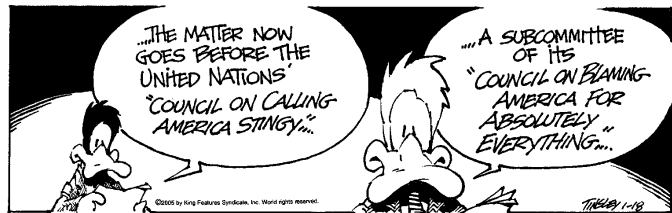
But yes, of course, we will support efforts by the newly elected government to set a schedule for the withdrawal of these forces once they are no longer needed.

Holding the elections is our only choice, and it should be done on schedule. To put them off would be to give in to a terrible clandestine plot that might well lead to canceling them forever. This would lead Iraq back to where we were under the former regime.

Karim Khutur Almusawi is the representative in Washington of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, a leading Shiite political party. This column first appeared in the Los Angeles Times.

Mallard Fillmore

BY BRUCE TINSLEY





"Desperate Housewives" captured the award for best television series, musical or comedy. The cast members are, from left, Marcia Cross, Nicolette Sheridan, Felicity Huffman, Teri Hatcher and Eva Longoria.



Jamie Foxx won the award for best actor in a musical or comedy for his work in "Ray."



Hilary Swank, who appears in "Million Dollar Baby," and Leonardo DiCaprio, star of "The Aviator," each won Golden Globes for acting.

A 'Golden' night for Hollywood

'Aviator,' 'Sideways' take top film prizes as 'Housewives' scores on TV

BY DAVID GERMAIN
The Associated Press

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. — The Golden Globes set up an Academy Awards rematch between Hilary Swank and Annette Bening, while Jamie Foxx fired up his Oscar front-runner status. And a win for "The Aviator" gave Martin Scorsese the edge for finally coming away with a best picture win at the Oscars.

The Howard Hughes epic "The Aviator" was the big winner with three Globes, including best dramatic picture, but Sunday night's ceremony was a split decision for Scorsese, who lost the directing prize to Clint Eastwood for the boxing saga "Million Dollar Baby."

The road-trip comedy "Sideways" was named best musical or comedy film, while lead-acting honors went to Swank for "Million Dollar Baby," Bening for the theater farce "Being Julia," Foxx for the Ray Charles film biography "Ray" and Leonardo DiCaprio as Hughes in "The Aviator."

Clive Owen and Natalie Portman won supporting-acting honors for the sex drama "Closer." Their wins were a bit surprising given that Morgan Freeman for "Million Dollar Baby" and Cate Blanchett for "The Aviator" had been viewed as likely favorites.

Foxx, considered the best actor favorite for the Oscars, was awarded Feb. 27, said backstage he was having the best night of his life, winning the prize for his uncanny re-creation of singer Charles, who died last year.

"It's a beautiful thing for Ray and everything he leaves us," said Foxx, who won for best actor in a musical or comedy. Foxx had a record three Globe nominations going into Sunday but lost the other two, supporting movie actor for "Collateral" and TV movie or miniseries actor for "Redemption."

Bening won the musical or comedy actress prize for "Being Julia," playing a conniving 1930s stage

diva exacting vengeance on the duplicitous men in her life. It was the first awards-worthy role Bening has had since "American Beauty" five years ago, when she was the front-runner but lost the Golden Globe dramatic prize and the best actress Oscar to underdog Swank for "Boys Don't Cry."

Not wanting to jinx her Oscar chances, Bening sidestepped a question backstage at the Globes about what she would wear to the Oscars. "Trick question," Bening quipped.

Swank, playing a fighter whose life turns tragic, won the dramatic actress Globe for "Million Dollar Baby." She downplayed the potential Oscar rematch with Bening.

"I don't really see it as competition," Swank said. "Annette's amazing, and she was so gracious to me five years ago when we were both nominated. She gave me good advice and she was gracious, and she's an inspiration."

"I think it's just unfortunate that things are seen as winners and losers, because in the end, the performances all speak for themselves and make everyone, I think, a winner. I'm just honored to have my name mentioned with her."

The Globes serve as the most prominent ceremony in Hollywood's pregame show leading up to the Academy Awards. Globes are presented by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, whose small membership of about 90 people pales compared with the nearly 6,000 film professionals eligible to vote for the Oscars.

Yet the Globes historically serve as a solid forecast that helps set the odds for subsequent film honors.

Golden Globe winners gain attention that can put them on the inside track for prizes from acting, directing and other filmmaking guilds — momentum that often sticks with them right through Oscar night.



"Arrested Development" star Jason Bateman won for best actor in a musical or comedy series. "It's a pretty tough town and it's tenuous at best and if it goes perfectly, you get fired at the end of it and you have to find another one," he said.



William Shatner of "Boston Legal" won for best supporting actor in a series, miniseries or TV movie. "I'm ready to party," Shatner said after his win. "I have a 6:30 call tomorrow to be Denny Crane. So I have until 5:30."

Some quotes from onstage and backstage at Sunday night's Golden Globe Awards:

■ "What comes into mind at the moment is, like, Mae West, although I probably wouldn't do it, you know. I'm a little too cool for that role now. Maybe Carol Channing."

■ —Johnny Depp, when asked if there's any role he's itching to play

■ "If any of the actors are having difficult vocal movements, she's the person."

■ —Geoffrey Rush, paying tribute to his voice coach

■ "It was the only thing I still had clean."

■ —Rolfte Kent, a nominee for the original score of "Sideways," explaining why he wore a kilt

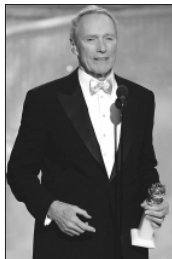
■ "I used to think it was corny when people would say you were looking down on you. And I didn't really. I didn't believe it. But I got a feeling."

■ —An emotional Jamie Foxx, thanking his grandmother Estelle, who helped raise him and who recently died

■ "I also want to thank you for having Prince, William Shatner, Mick Jagger and Puff Daddy on the same stage. That is a sign of the apocalypse"

■ —Robin Williams

—The Associated Press



"Million Dollar Baby" star Clint Eastwood won for best director.

The winners

Motion Pictures

Picture, Drama: "The Aviator"

Actor, Drama: Leonardo DiCaprio, "The Aviator"

Actress, Drama: Hilary Swank, "Million Dollar Baby"

Picture, Musical or Comedy: "Sideways"

Actor, Musical or Comedy: Jamie Foxx, "Ray"

Actress, Musical or Comedy: Annette Bening, "Being Julia"

Supporting Actor: Clive Owen, "Closer"

Supporting Actress: Natalie Portman, "Closer"

Director: Clint Eastwood, "Million Dollar Baby"

Screenplay: Alexander Payne and Jim Taylor, "Sideways"

Original Score: Howard Shore, "The Aviator"

Original Song: "Old Habits Die Hard" from "Alicia," by Mick Jagger and David A. Stewart

Foreign Language: "The Sea Inside," Spain

Television

Drama Series: "Nip/Tuck," FX

Actor, Drama: Ian McEwan, "Deadwood"

Actress, Drama: Mariska Hargitay, "Law & Order: Special Victims Unit"

Musical or Comedy Series: "Desperate Housewives," ABC

Actor, Musical or Comedy: Jason Bateman, "Arrested Development"

Actress, Musical or Comedy: Teri Hatcher, "Desperate Housewives"

Miniseries or TV Movie: "The Life and Death of Peter Sellers," HBO

Actor, Miniseries or TV Movie: Geoffrey Rush, "The Life and Death of Peter Sellers"

Actress, Miniseries or TV Movie: Glenn Close, "The Lion in Winter"

Supporting Actor, Series, Miniseries or TV Movie: William Shatner, "Boston Legal"

Supporting Actress, Series, Miniseries or TV Movie: Angela Huston, "Iron Jawed Angels"

Actress, Miniseries or TV Movie: Glenn Close, "The Lion in Winter"

Supporting Actor, Series, Miniseries or TV Movie: William Shatner, "Boston Legal"

Supporting Actress, Series, Miniseries or TV Movie: Angela Huston, "Iron Jawed Angels"

Actress, Miniseries or TV Movie: Glenn Close, "The Lion in Winter"

Supporting Actor, Series, Miniseries or TV Movie: William Shatner, "Boston Legal"

Supporting Actress, Series, Miniseries or TV Movie: Angela Huston, "Iron Jawed Angels"

Cecil B. DeMille Award
Robin Williams



A dental office X-ray shows a four-inch nail embedded in Patrick Lawler's skull. The nail was removed Thursday at Littleton Adventist Hospital in Denver.

Nail found embedded in man's skull

BY ERIN GARTNER

The Associated Press

LITTLETON, Colo. — A dentist found the source of the toothache Patrick Lawler was complaining about on the roof of his mouth: a four-inch nail the construction worker had unknowingly embedded in his skull six days earlier.

A nail gun backfired on Lawler, 23, on Jan. 6 while working in Breckenridge, a ski resort town in the central Colorado mountains. The tool sent a nail into a piece

of wood nearby, but Lawler didn't realize a second nail had shot through his mouth, said his sister, Lisa Metcalfe.

Following the accident, Lawler had what he thought was a minor toothache and blurry vision. On Wednesday, after painkillers and ice didn't ease the pain, he went to a dental office where his wife, Katherine, works.

"We all are friends, so I thought the (dentists) were joking ... then the doctor came out and said

"There's really a nail," said Katherine Lawler said. "Patrick just broke down. I mean, he had been eating ice cream to help the swelling."

He was taken to a suburban Denver hospital, where he underwent a four-hour surgery. The nail had plunged 1½ inches into his brain, barely missing his right eye, Metcalfe said.

"This is the second one we've seen in this hospital where the person was injured by the nail gun and didn't actually realize the nail had been embedded in their

skull," neurosurgeon Sean Markey told KUSA-TV in Denver.

Lawler was recovering Sunday in the hospital, where he was expected to spend several more days.

Despite his lack of medical insurance and hospital bills between \$80,000 and \$100,000, Katherine Lawler said her husband is in good spirits.

"The doctor said, 'If you're going to have a nail in the brain, that's the way you want it to be,'" she said. "He's the luckiest guy, ever."

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'Fear Factor Live' show to open at theme parks

BY GARY GENTILE

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Apparently fear is not a factor when it comes to melding a TV reality show with a theme park attraction.

An audience-participation show based on the NBC show "Fear Factor" will open in May at the Universal Studios theme parks in Hollywood and Orlando, Florida, the company said.

The "Fear Factor Live" show is an example of the kind of corporate "synergy" resulting from NBC's purchase of Universal in 2003. The deal combined the television network with Universal's movie studio, cable channels and theme parks.

"We've always looked at 'Fear Factor' as kind of a theme park ride on television," NBC Universal Television Group chief Jeff Zucker said. "It made sense to extend that brand into the theme parks."

The attraction will pit theme park guests against each other in a series of extreme stunts that will replicate the physical and culinary challenges seen on the TV series, the company said.

The exact nature of the stunts has not been disclosed, although participants could be hung from harnesses and challenged to eat unappetizing concoctions, the company said. But contestants will not eat live bugs, as they do on TV.

"We worked closely with the producers of the TV show to come up with a slate of stunts and challenges," said Scott Trowbridge, executive vice president of creative development at Universal Parks and Resorts.

"We are going to put our guests in situations where they will come face to face with nasty, weird stuff," he said. "Are we going to go as gross as the show? No. But you don't have to resort to live bugs to test people's limits."

The attraction will be held in a theater that holds about 1,800 people. Six people will be chosen to compete while other audience members will be given roles, such as shooting water or air at contestants or controlling some of the obstacles on stage.

Anti-obesity program

DC WASHINGTON — The vending machine trade association is launching an anti-obesity campaign to encourage healthful food choices, hoping to fend off efforts to remove machines from schools and improve the industry's image as concerns grow about the fat-tissue of America.

The program, "Balanced for Life," is being unveiled at an event featuring pro football Hall of Famer Lynn Swann.

The effort by the National Automatic Merchandising Association includes a color-coded rating system for food sold in vending machines, indicating healthful choices and those that should be eaten in moderation.

The group hopes to influence public opinion by encouraging nutrition education and physical activity programs in schools and through media coverage, the association's Web site says.

New Quecreek accident

PA SOMERSET — A trans-former explosion injured two men at the Quecreek Mine, where a celebrated rescue of nine trapped miners made international headlines. One of the injured miners also was part of the July 2002 rescue drama.

The state Department of Environmental Protection and the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration were trying to determine what caused the problem, which left the mine without power.

Twenty-two miners underground at the time power was cut escaped without incident using their lamplights, said DEP spokeswoman Betsy Mallison. It wasn't immediately clear when power would be restored.

Mallison said the explosion was not inside the mine, but at a substation outside. The injured men suffered burns to their hands and faces, she said.

Tsunami affects well

VA RICHMOND — The South Asian earthquake that spawned deadly tsunami waves also shifted water levels by at least 1 foot in a geologically sensitive Virginia well some 9,600 miles away from the epicenter, researchers say.

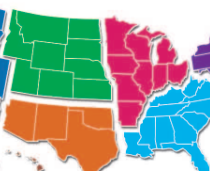
The well near Christiansburg, which started oscillating about an hour after the magnitude 9.0 quake near Sumatra on Dec. 26, is particularly sensitive to movements in the earth and is monitored by the U.S. Geological Survey.

David Nelms, a groundwater specialist with the USGS in Richmond, saw the changes from his computer.

Suspected meth lab

AR RUSSELLVILLE — Police busted a restaurant they say doubled as a methamphetamine lab and quarantined food that may have been cooked with some of the same utensils used to produce drugs.

Police who raided the West Main Cafe in Arkansas on Wednesday found methamphetamine in a room next to the kitchen, coffee filters with drug residue, and other ingredients used to make the drug, said Larry Johnson, director of the



AMERICAN ROUNDUP

district drug task force.

"We don't know how long this has been going on. Apparently, though, all the food in that building is kaput," said health inspector John Jones, who checked and passed the restaurant on Dec. 28.

Preacher collapses, dies

FL OVIEDO — A Presbyterian minister collapsed and died at the pulpit after saying "And when I go to heaven ..." his colleague said.

The Rev. Jack Arnold, 69, was nearing the end of his sermon at Covenant Presbyterian Church when he grabbed the podium before falling to the floor, said the Rev. Michael S. Beats, the church's associate pastor.

Before collapsing, Arnold quoted the 18th-century Bible scholar John Wesley who said, "Until my work on this earth is done, I am immortal. But when my work for Christ is done ... I go to be with Jesus." Beats said in a telephone interview.

Judges can right errors

NH CONCORD — New Hampshire courts have joined most of the nation's judicial systems that allow judges clear authority to correct legal mistakes made by their colleagues and lawyers.

A year ago, a Bedford man

sought a new trial on his six stalking convictions, arguing that his trial judge gave the jury bad instructions.

The state Supreme Court refused — not based on the instructions, but because neither the man nor his lawyer had raised the complaint at trial.

Until Nov. 1, court rules required lawyers to "preserve" a complaint at the trial level if they wanted to raise it later on appeal. Otherwise, defendants' only alternatives were to call their lawyers ineffective and seek new trial.

The new "plain error rule" applies to criminal and civil cases and is modeled on a federal rule. It allows a judge at any level of court to correct a mistake even if the parties didn't bring it to the judge's attention.

Jailhouse infections

PA PHILADELPHIA — A federal jury has awarded \$1.2 million to two former inmates who developed abscess wounds from a drug-resistant skin infection that swept through a county jail in 2001 and 2002.

The jury ruled that Bucks County prison officials failed to get the men prompt medical treatment. Kevin Keller, 27, and Benjamin Martin, 23, said they begged for help for weeks as their infections spread.

Martin said he suffered nerve damage in both legs after the infection rooted in his hip. Keller said prison staff ignored his requests for a doctor as the infection traveled through his body.

Public drinking law

FL JACKSONVILLE — A month before thousands of fans arrive in Jacksonville for the Super Bowl, a judge ruled the city's ban on drinking alcohol in public is unconstitutional.

Duval County Judge Charles Coffey ruled that Jacksonville's law has been selectively enforced and gives too much authority to the mayor to make exemptions.

The decision stems from a challenge to the arrest of three homeless men charged with drinking beer in the city's Treaty Oak Park, located in an area where Super Bowl fans will be allowed to drink.

The park is inside an entertainment zone adopted by the city council in May. Beginning 18 days before the Feb. 6 Super Bowl, laws against open containers, noise pollution and outdoor alcohol sales on city property will be suspended in the zone.

Restocking sturgeon

LA NEW ORLEANS — More than 10,000 pallid sturgeon bred in hatcheries have been released into the lower Mississippi River basin as part of a multistate effort to save the ancient fish known for its shovel-shaped snout and armor-like plates.

Since October, state and federal biologists in Louisiana released 6,478 juvenile sturgeon into the Mississippi and 3,576 into waters that flow into the Atchafalaya and Red rivers. The bottom-dwelling pallid sturgeon, known as one of the ugliest and least understood creatures in the Missouri and Mississippi river systems, was placed on the federal endangered species list in 1990.



Dedicated fan

Don Galla, from Altoona, Pa., watches the Pittsburgh Steelers play the New York Jets

in an AFC divisional playoff game in Pittsburgh. The Steelers won 20-17.



Small but mighty

Shiner, a 2-year-old Parson Russell terrier owned by Sharon and Mike Shea of Dodgeville, Wis., makes himself at home by jumping on the beds after checking in to the Wyndham Harbour Island Hotel for the AKC/Eukanuba National Championship dog show in Tampa, Fla.



Vigil for victims

Aminda Kadir, center, of Silver Spring, Md., who is a native of Indonesia, and Sandra Ladds, right, of Arlington, Va., participate in a candlelight vigil for the tsunami victims at the Indonesian Embassy in Washington.



New clock tower

A worker guides the final piece of the new clock tower at the van der Berg Learning Center on the State University of New York campus in New Paltz, N.Y. The tower, made by Kentucky-based Campbellville Industries, is a replica of the clock tower that was built in 1932 but destroyed by fire in 1990.



Sharing the road
Petersburg, Alaska.

Jennifer Dupree, left, and her quarter horse named Cash wait for a snowmobile to pass on the Twin Creeks logging road on Mitkof Island north of Petersburg, Alaska.



Delivering the game ball

Soldiers from Fort Hood, Texas, rappel to deliver the game ball for the U.S. Army All-American Bowl in San Antonio. The game featured many of the top high school football players in the country.



Slippery jaunt

British ice climber Simon Yates looks down to talk to his nine students near Keene Valley, N.Y., during the annual Adirondack International Mountaifest.



Chilled landscape

An arctic-like scene is shown at Brighton Beach on the North Shore of Lake Superior in Duluth, Minn., as the temperature sat at -17 Fahrenheit.

Irked at 'crazy' bear

VT MONTPELIER — A company that sells cuddly Teddy bears through the mail has angered mental health advocates with a special item for Valentine's Day.

The Vermont Teddy Bear Co. is featuring a 15-inch bear in a strait-jacket. The \$69.95 stuffed animal is called the "Crazy for You Bear" and comes with its own commitment papers.

"This bear was created in the spirit of Valentine's Day and as with all of our bears it was designed to be a lighthearted depiction of the sentiment of love," the company said in a statement.

Mental health advocates believe the bear is "a tasteless use of marketing that stigmatizes persons with mental illness," said Jerry Groessel, executive director of the Vermont chapter of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill.

The company said it would discontinue the bear, but not before Feb. 14.

"We recognize that this is a sensitive, human issue and sincerely apologize if we have offended anyone," the firm said.

Plane crash kills 1

TN KNOXVILLE — The president of a flying club died after his airplane crashed into the woods south of the city.

Pat Young, 52, and Dorothy Young, 45, of Seymour, Tenn., were the only occupants of a single-engine Beechcraft 35 Bonanza that went down on the shore of Fort Loudoun Lake, officials said.

The aircraft was hung up in the forest's canopy, and the Youngs were trapped for nearly 5½ hours before rescuers were able to lower them from the wreckage.

Despite prolonged efforts to resuscitate him, Pat Young died minutes after he was removed from the plane. Dorothy Young was taken to the University of Tennessee Medical Center, where she was listed in serious condition.

Support for seat belts

NH CONCORD — The Association of New Hampshire Police Chiefs is supporting a mandatory seat-belt law for the first time.

The move follows a rise in highway deaths to 167 in 2004, up from 119 in 2003. New Hampshire is the only state that doesn't require seat belts for everyone in a car. Currently, only occupants 17 or younger have to buckle up.

Big sweep for GOP

GA ATLANTA — Republicans completed their takeover of state government by taking the reins of the State House for the first time in 135 years. The Republican House completes a state sweep that began two years ago when the GOP won the governor's office and Senate. Rep. Glenn Richardson was elected the first GOP House Speaker since Reconstruction.

Too warm for winter

NY NEW YORK — Strike two, they're out.

City officials, who had postponed the Winter Festival 2005 for a week because it's been too warm to make artificial snow, announced that the party is officially off until next year.

"To our dismay, Mother Nature wasn't on our side this year," Parks and Recreation Commissioner Adrian Benepe said in a statement.

"This was a difficult decision to make, but, ultimately, the only one we could make," he said. "Winter Festival is one of our favorite annual events. The weather may not have cooperated this year, but we anticipate a flurry of winter fun for Winter Festival 2006."

Investigating fraud

MI DETROIT — Federal authorities said they are investigating groups that may have helped thousands of people fraudulently obtain state driver's licenses.

Authorities said they suspect the groups brought people to Michigan to get licenses they likely couldn't get in other states, charging them a large fee.

"We saw an alarming amount of ... cases where groups were bringing criminals or illegal aliens to Michigan for the sole purpose of obtaining a Michigan driver's license," said Brian Moskowitz, special agent in charge of the Detroit office of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. "I don't think it is out of the question to say that there are thousands of them out there."

Authorities are targeting groups that allegedly sold licenses while Michigan lagged behind other states with its residency requirements. The state beefed up its rules last month, requiring adults applying for their first license or personal identification card to provide documentation they live in Michigan.

A spokeswoman for Secretary of State Terry Lynn Land, Kelly Chesney, said the state continues to work with the federal government to reduce fraud.

Tuition increases

TN NASHVILLE — The state program that sells prepaid college tuition is raising the cost of a year's education most state schools by \$371 to \$5,080. State Treasurer Dale Sims said the new fee covers a gap between tuition inflation and investment earnings. Participants pay for a child's future college tuition at today's prices.

Fast delivery

MO UNION — Ann McDonald knew the baby was coming and there wasn't a hospital in sight, so she pulled over and delivered the child outside — appropriately enough — a McDonald's restaurant.

Chayse Westin McDonald was due that Wednesday. But on the Sunday before, Ann McDonald knew her time was getting near — and fast.

Problem was, there is no hospital in this eastern Missouri town, and the closest one was 15 minutes away.

McDonald, whose husband is fighting in Iraq, and the child's grandmother, Linda Cuneo, got in the car, but it soon became evident they wouldn't make it to a hospital. So they pulled over at a McDonald's in Union.

The baby was born beneath the golden arches.

"Of course everyone is like, 'Are you going to name him Ronald?'" Ann McDonald said.

Stories and photos from wire services

FACES

Singer's daughters too young for 'Lights'

Plenty of people saw Tim McGraw's dark side in his portrayal of an alcoholic father in the movie "Friday Night Lights."

The country singer's three young daughters were not among them, however.



McGraw

"I wouldn't want them to see Daddy like that and have them not be able to understand the difference," McGraw said of the film, which comes to video and DVD Tuesday.

The singer has three children, all under age 7, with wife and fellow musician Faith Hill.

The movie was McGraw's first venture into Hollywood. It stars Billy Bob Thornton and received favorable reviews for its depiction of a high school football team in Texas.

McGraw, 37, says he drew from personal experience to play **Charles Billingsley**, the bullying father of a Permian Panthers player.

"I grew up in Louisiana and was around sports my whole life, so I always saw that kind of guy hanging around. It's an adaptation of a lot of people I knew growing up."

'Cheers' star christens research vessel

Actor **Ted Danson** served drinks on the TV show "Cheers." He used a bottle of bubbly to christen a catamaran that will spend five months searching the seas for pollution and threatened marine life.



Danson

Danson, a board member of the conservation group Oceana, christened the 71-foot vessel "Ranger" at Marina del Rey on Friday.

Oceana plans to sail the vessel to areas of Central America, the Caribbean, Africa and Europe that are threatened by pollution and overfishing.

"Ranger will be Oceana's eyes and ears in the oceans," Danson said. "It will enable us to record visually the horrors of the deep as well as the wonders of what is happening to our oceans."

Danson said he hoped the project will spur people to join the tribe's efforts.

Ramone tribute unveiled in cemetery

A bronze statue honoring late punk guitarist **Johnny Ramone** was unveiled before hundreds of celebrities and cheering fans at the Hollywood Forever Cemetery.

Ramone, co-founder and guitarist of The Ramones, was 55 when he died of prostate cancer in September at his Los Angeles home. The \$100,000 statue sits near the grave of bandmate **Dee Dee Ramone**, who died of a drug overdose in 2002.

Grammy-winning producer **Rick Rubin** said at the Friday unveiling that The Ramones were as influential to the world of rock 'n' roll as The Beatles.

"There was the music before them and the music after," he said.

Tommy Ramone, the only surviving member of the original band, said the memorial symbolized the spirit of The Ramones' music.

"He wanted the fans to have a place to come and a way to feel in touch with this music that got so many things right," he said.

Linda Ramone stands by the newly unveiled statue of her late husband, guitarist **Johnny Ramone**, at the Hollywood Forever Cemetery in Los Angeles on Friday. Ramone, co-founder and guitarist of The Ramones, was 55 when he died of prostate cancer on Sept. 15. The statue is near the grave of bandmate **Dee Dee Ramone**.



Dennis Quaid and Topher Grace appear in a scene from "In Good Company."

BY HANH NGUYEN
Zap2it.com

Topher Grace, who often mouths off to his sitcom father on Fox's "That '70s Show," is once again giving gray hairs and grief to the older generation in his latest feature "In Good Company."

The comedy — written and directed by Oscar-nominated scribe Paul Weitz — centers on young upstart Carter Duryea (Grace) who takes over the job of Dan Foreman (Dennis Quaid), the head of ad sales for a leading sports publication. Dan isn't too keen on taking a pay cut, especially with another baby on the way and his daughter's recent acceptance into a pricey college. Carter can't be bothered to play nice at the office, however, now that his beautiful

Wife left him.

Weitz wasn't that familiar with Grace's previous work but cast the 26-year-old actor — who's been compared to a young Jack Lemmon — based on his everyman qualities and comic timing.

"He made me laugh the most and, appeared sharkey enough ... that one believed he could fire Dennis Quaid," says the director.

"That's such an important part of the jeopardy in the movie."

Besides acting the audition, Grace also had a fellow castmate's support in landing the role. "There were a lot more famous people who wanted to play my role (but) Dennis was kind enough to put in his three cents ... and said that I could do it," says Grace. "So I'm grateful for that."

Although the agent rivalry between the two men on screen didn't translate to real life, Quaid couldn't resist playing a little initiation prank on his co-star. On the first day of shooting, Quaid had finished doing close-ups for a long dialogue scene when it was time for Grace to shoot his own.

"I think that Paul did (Dennis') side of it first so that I could get my flow going," explains Grace. "Then they turned the cameras around on me, and when I came back his stand-in was there, and he said, 'I'll be reading Dennis' lines during this scene.'"

Weitz, who admits that he's "mortified by practical jokes," took pity on his star. "Topher was sitting there sweating and annoyed, and I came out and I said, 'No, he's only kidding.'"

The younger actor gets back at Quaid in the film, however. Not only does Carter take Dan's job, salary and office, he adds insult to injury when he starts to date Dan's daughter Alex (Scarlett Johansson).

Although Grace never plays the hunk on screen, his characters never fail to inspire amorous feelings in beautiful ladies, who include Kate Bosworth, Erika Christensen, Laura Prepon and even "older woman" Laura Linney in "P.S." Johansson's character, an ambitious yet naive college freshman, is no different.

"She has this line, 'I'm cursed with a functional family,' the implication being that she is drawn to Carter's dysfunction ... to the fact that he is 26 years old and divorced," says Weitz.

"Carter has got everything on paper: he's got the right car, and the right job and the right life and the right house," says Grace.

"(But) his parents were both absent (so) he's dating Dan's daughter as a consolation prize instead of actually being in the family."

Grace under fire

Actor Topher Grace shows grown-up chops as he shoots for big-screen stardom

In real life, Grace doesn't have to settle for any consolation prizes. Besides starring in one of Fox's most popular sitcoms, the actor has received critical raves for his big-screen performances as the clever but jaded druggie in "Traffic" and as the one redeeming feature of the lackluster teen comedy "Win a Date with Tad Hamilton!"

Now, the National Board of Review has named his roles in "In Good Company" and "P.S." as the best breakthrough performances by an actor for 2004.

Even with all this attention, it's unlikely that the actor, who never went to acting school, will follow in the cocky footsteps of his character Carter Duryea.

"I'm really open in talking about how green I am and how much I just want to learn," says Grace. "A big part of it for me was just trying to shut up and observe."

The 26-year-old Grace, who hosted "Saturday Night Live" last week, has been compared to a young Jack Lemmon.

NBC/AP



Fruit fly scientists break postal agreement

BY RICK CALLAHAN

The Associated Press

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. — In incubation rooms filled with the smell of cornmeal and molasses, Indiana University biologists nurture millions of fruit flies from squirming larvae to winged adults.

These gnat-like insects — pests in many Americans' kitchens — are the sole product of what's considered the world's most comprehensive repository for mutant fruit fly strains believed by genetics researchers.

However, the tiny bugs are making outlaws of their keepers.

Every time researchers send vials of the living flies, their eggs or larvae to overseas scientists, they break an international postal agreement that forbids mailing most live insects among about 190 participating nations.

"We can't stop supplying scientists with the things they need to do their research. At the same time, we don't want to be in violation of the law," said Kevin Cook, co-director of the Bloomington Drosophila Stock Center.

The postal accord was written early in the 20th century before fruit flies earned a key role in genetic research. It says only "live bees, leeches and silkworms" and "parasites and predators of injurious insects" can be sent overseas.

As genetic research heated up, however, so did demand for strains of fruit flies with mutations that influence a host of biologi-



The global demand for fruit flies rises every year despite a postal agreement that forbids mailing most live insects among about 190 participating nations.

cal functions. The fruit fly — or *Drosophila melanogaster* — is easy to raise, has a short life span, possesses giant chromosomes and reproduces quickly, enabling researchers to study mutations from generation to generation.

In 2003, the Bloomington center mailed nearly 125,000 samples of fruit flies about 43,000 of them to overseas labs. Last year, shipments rose about 20 percent,

Cook said.

Akhillesh Mathur, mail program manager for the Universal Postal Union, the Switzerland-based group that administers the rule, said the illegal shipments by the Indiana center and its counterparts went undetected for decades.

Cook said he studied the rules and thought it was OK to ship the flies. He learned otherwise about two years ago,

after postal inspectors returned a fly shipment destined for overseas.

Cook consulted immediately with federal officials to try to change the rule, which he feared could jeopardize the center's growing work. And he continued to ship the flies to overseas labs.

Laurie Tompkins, who coordinates the National Institutes of Health's grant programs for fruit fly research, said the Bloomington center is the world's premier repository for the insects and plays a key role in human genetic research.

"Every month we gain some new insight from studies of flies that sheds light on human metabolism, biochemistry or some important function," said Tompkins, who supports lifting the postal ban.

That change appears imminent. In September, after months of effort by U.S. Postal Service and State Department officials, the Universal Postal Union approved a proposal Cook helped draft that permits mailing live fruit flies between nations.

The new rule is set to take effect in January 2006, but the State Department has proposed accelerating it to this spring. The UPU's Postal Operations Council is expected to consider that proposal at its meeting in Bern this month.

If it is accepted, the member nations are expected to implement the change by June 1, something that will delight Cook.

"It will be nice to have this taken care of so we can do things right," he said.

Students dig find of mammoth on campus

BY TERRY HILLIG

St. Louis Post-Dispatch

ST. LOUIS — Students at Principia College in Elsin don't have to trek hundreds or thousands of miles to participate in one of the country's most significant paleontological digs.

In fact, they don't even have to leave campus. The 17,500-year-old bones of a woolly mammoth known affectionately as "Benny" (after the man who found him) are being carefully excavated in the middle of the Principia campus, only yards from dormitories and academic buildings.

Principia employee Benny White thought he had found something significant one spring day in 1999 when his back hit a piece of white material while he was excavating for a manhole between two dormitories, Rackham Court and Gehner House.

White was right. Faculty members quickly identified the object as the tooth of a mammoth. Another bone was visible in the pit. The students knew they had a piece of something interesting but they were unsure just how interesting it might be — whether the objects were an isolated find or part of a larger set of skeletal remains.

But they were sure of one thing. The excavation would be carried out carefully and in a way that in-



Principia College student Katie Crocker takes a last look at Benny the mammoth as volunteers prepare to cover the dig site with plastic and insulation for the winter.

volved and educated Principia students in the process. The pit was re-filled to protect the remains until that could be arranged.

"We didn't go back to the site until the spring of 2002," said Janis Trewey, who supervises the mammoth dig and teaches classes that are based on it.

As a geologist, Trewey was familiar with soils and rock. She enlisted the help of experts in paleontology — the study of ancient plants and animals — and experts on loess (pronounced "luss"), the type of soil that covered Benny.

A course based on the mammoth was developed, and the first class was offered during the spring quarter of 2002.

Since then, students have care-

fully uncovered about 50 percent of the mammoth's skeleton.

The tusks are still in the ground, attached to the skull. Trewey doubts that the mandible, or lower jaw, will be found. It may have been inadvertently destroyed in some earlier camp excavation.

So far, there are no clues to the cause of his death. Animals that suffer a lingering death are typically found near a water source, but Benny is atop a bluff above the Mississippi River valley on one of the highest points in the immediate area.

The location suggests a sudden death, but Trewey doubts Benny was killed by another animal or animals.

The experts believe Benny was 39 to 43 years old when he died.

Future NASA chief to decide new vision

BY ALEXANDRA WITZE

The Dallas Morning News

DALLAS — America's return to the moon may happen after all.

One year after President Bush laid out a sweeping vision for space exploration, NASA finds itself in an unusual position — with possibly enough money and congressional support to pull it off.

As the beleaguered agency struggled to get space shuttles off the ground after the 2003 Columbia disaster, NASA chief Sean O'Keefe made sure that it reorganized and streamlined itself to fulfill the president's directive. That could mean astronauts bouncing across the lunar surface as early as 2015 and maybe even flying to Mars after that.

Now, with O'Keefe leaving the agency next month, it's up to his successor — as yet unnamed — to determine whether NASA will re-live the glory of its Apollo days or flounder in search of direction.

The broad changes in NASA have surprised many who are used to seeing NASA's arm-waving goals sputter into oblivion. In 1989, on the 20th anniversary of Apollo 11's landing on the moon, the first President Bush exhorted the nation to send astronauts to the moon and Mars.

That plan failed within four years, killed in part by lack of congressional support. So many space experts were skeptical when the current President Bush proposed much the same thing

during an address at NASA on Jan. 14, 2004. And publicly, space remained low on the president's agenda for the rest of the year.

Still, O'Keefe holds that Bush has laid out a clear path for the agency.

O'Keefe will leave NASA next month to assume the chancellorship of Louisiana State University. Many names have circulated as possible successors, the most cited being Lt. Gen. Ronald Kaulish, former head of the Missile Defense Agency.

Not all scientists believe that NASA should focus on manned missions to the moon and Mars. In November, the American Physical Society issued a blistering critique of the program, saying that "very important science opportunities could be lost or delayed seriously as a consequence of shifting NASA priorities."

Many space experts believe that robotic missions to other planets give NASA far more bang for the buck even if they are less glamorous than an astronaut walking on Mars.

For once, there's money available for such an ambitious plan. In November, as part of its annual budget package, Congress gave NASA \$16.2 billion, or \$822 million more than it got last year.

NASA also got unprecedented freedom to move money around within its budget, to help cover the unexpected costs of returning the shuttle to flight and fixing the aging Hubble Space Telescope.



EUROPEAN FORECAST

Benelux: Cloudy with rainshowers. Highs in the upper 30s. Wednesday lows in the lower 30s.

Britain, Ireland: Mostly cloudy with isolated rainshowers. Highs in the mid to upper 40s. Wednesday lows in the 30s.

Croatia and Bosnia: Partly cloudy with fog in the morning and mostly cloudy in the afternoon. Highs in the mid to upper 30s. Wednesday lows in the lower to mid 20s.

France: Cloudy with rainshowers.
Highs in the mid 40s to mid 50s.

Northern Germany: Cloudy with rain-showers. Highs in the mid 30s to mid 40s. Wednesday lows in the lower to mid 30s.

Southern Germany: Mostly cloudy with rainshowers. Highs in the mid 30s to mid 40s. Wednesday lows in the lower to mid 30s.

Hungary: Partly cloudy with fog in the morning and cloudy with isolated rainshowers in the afternoon. Highs in the mid 30s. Wednesday lows in the mid 20s.

Northern Italy: Partly cloudy. Highs in the mid to upper 40s. Wednesday lows in the mid to upper 30s.

Southern Italy: Partly cloudy. Highs in the lower to mid 50s. Wednesday lows in the lower to mid 40s.

Kosovo: Mostly cloudy. Highs in the 30s. Wednesday lows in the mid to upper 20s.

Norway: Mostly cloudy with rain and snow mix. Highs in the mid 30s to lower 40s. Wednesday lows in the 30s.

Portugal, Spain: Partly cloudy. Highs in the mid to upper 50s in the North and mid 60s to lower 70s in the South. Wednesday lows in the lower 30s to lower 40s.

Turkey: Mostly cloudy with rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. Highs in the upper 40s to upper 50s. Wednesday lows in the upper 30s to lower 40s.

For current weather watches, warnings, and 5-day forecasts go to the USAF Operational Weather Squadron home page at:
<https://ows.sembach.af.mil>
<http://ows.public.sembach.af.mil>

KEY: Sunny Pt. Cldy. Mostly cldy. Cloudy Showers Tstorms Rain Rain/snow Snow

Cold frnt. Warm frnt. TROUGH Occluded fr. Staty. front Low High

AFRICA

	HI	LO		HI	LO
Cape Town	85	68	Mogadishu	89	7
Dakar	76	64	Nairobi	82	5
Freetown	90	72	Rabat	63	4
Kinshasa	89	72	Trienli	60	

THE WORLD

	HI	LO		HI	LO
Amsterdam	42	38	Manila	84	77
Bahrain	73	58	Mexico City	66	37
Beijing	48	18	Montreal	10	-
Beirut	59	51	Riyadh	77	58
Bermuda	72	57	Rio de Jan	84	78
Caracas	86	71	Seoul	41	23
Helsinki	37	33	Sofia	36	23
Hong Kong	66	59	Sydney	76	63
Ishgari	57	48	Tokyo	49	38

TODAY'S STATESIDE OUTLOOK

[illegible]

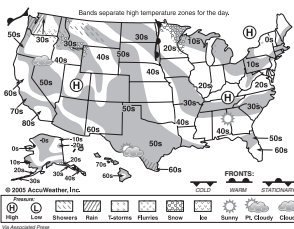
16	Or	Hamburg	22	12	Or
6	Al	Harford Spgld	19	11	Or
26	Al	Hartford	21	12	Or
26	Po	Hartford	21	12	Or
18	Or	Honolulu	81	67	Or
18	Or	Houston	82	67	Or
18	Or	Houston	82	67	Or
51	Po	Indianapolis	20	20	Or
3	Po	Jacksonville	43	27	Or
2	Po	Jacksonville	43	27	Po
40	Po	Juneau	39	34	Sho
40	Po	Juneau	39	34	Sho
1	Al	Key West	68	68	Po
20	Po	Knoxville	32	22	Or
2	Al	Lafayette	22	21	Or
34	Or	Lansing	22	21	Po
8	Po	Las Vegas	66	45	Or
8	Po	Las Vegas	66	45	Or
29	Or	Lincoln	34	23	Po
29	Or	Lincoln	34	23	Po
29	Or	Little Rock	28	23	Or
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3	Or	Mpls-St Paul	29	19	Sho

San Jose	32	21	Cr	San Angelo
New Orleans	50	34	Cr	San Antonio
New York City	50	34	Cr	San Antonio
Newark, N.J.	19	12	Cr	San Francisco
Portland, Ore.	29	21	Cr	San Francisco
San Francisco	29	21	Cr	San Jose
Oklahoma City	43	33	Po	San Juan, P.R.
Omaha	43	33	Po	Santa Fe
Orlando	59	40	Po	Santa Fe
Pasadena	32	27	Cr	Seawall
Pendleton, Ore.	32	27	Cr	Seattle
Philadelphia	24	14	Cr	Shawnee
Phoenix	59	40	Po	Silver Spring, Md.
Pittsburgh	18	14	Cr	Sioux City
Portland, Ore.	39	19	Po	Spokane
Portland, Maine	56	47	Rain	Springfield, Ill.
Portland, Ore.	12	5	Cr	Springfield, Mass.
Providence	12	5	Cr	St. Louis
Raleigh-Durham	31	17	Cr	Tempe & Phoenix
Richmond, Va.	46	20	Cr	Topolia
Richmond	31	17	Cr	Tucson
Riverside	46	20	Cr	Tulsa
Rochester	13	12	Cr	Tulsa
Rochester	20	12	Po	Upland
San Antonio	33	23	Po	Washington, D.C.
St. Louis	33	23	Po	W. Palm Beach
St. Thomas	63	73	Po	Wichita Falls
				Wills-Kane

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THE UNITED STATES TODAY

As of noon, Eastern U.S. time



Check our Relocation Guide
every Saturday to find
Realtors at your new station.

STARS AND STRIPES®
Your Hometown Newspaper

Horoscope

The moon and sun in earth signs encourage reasonable decisions that lead to greater stability both financially and emotionally.

Taurus lunar influence promises that with consistent baby steps we will prevail. The goal is still out of reach, but it is a tangible goal, and it doesn't take much imagination to actually feel what it will be like to hold it.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY

(January 18) Your theme this year is "living and loving in harmony." People come out of the woodwork to help you at precisely the right moment. In February, you acquire new technology that makes life easier, such as a computer or car. Spring is about mentors. Your lessons will stay with you a long time and also be viable! Lucky love signs are Aquarius and Aries.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

You're not feeling particularly social, so don't even try to fight it. Use the astrological vibes to get in tune with your body. Hit the gym. Put on the Walkman, and vent some of that restless energy on the treadmill.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

Emotional support comes in a feminine package. Reach out to a woman in your family, particularly a grandmother or elderly aunt. She needs your strength as well but may be too proud to admit it.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21)

Watch the clown of the zodiac now, juggling several different projects with ease and never letting anyone see the person behind the grease-paint. Watch for opportunities to delegate. The perfect person for the job is there.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)

A difficult situation concerning a man (probably not a family member or someone with whom you have romantic ties) is arising. The best defense is a good offense. The element of surprise is on your side. Keep him off balance.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

The timing is right to begin any sort of spiritual practice, such as tai chi,

meditation or yoga. Even if you've been practicing a particular discipline for years, you will benefit from a renewed sense of commitment.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

You are able to convey your thoughts clearly to those you love.

Even if the words aren't right, the emotion says it all. Your willingness to communicate even when you feel awkward will create even more love in your life.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23)

Gratitude is one of life's greatest blessings. If something intrigues you, thank the universe for giving you this opportunity to better yourself by rising above it. It is impossible to feel sorry for oneself while being grateful.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21)

As Yogi Berra said, "It's déjà vu all over again." But this time, a flash of insight into your own behavior could suddenly come to you, steering you in a new direction. Your curiosity is your best asset.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

A friend or colleague is stretching his or her wings, experimenting with finding personal power within the group dynamic. Encourage this person. The karmic payoff for you is huge, even if you can't immediately see it.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

The gateways to success are always open. If one door seems inaccessible, go around to the next. Keep trying until you find the one that yields easily to your touch. You, more than anyone, know the true value of patience.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

A co-worker or parent figure may make his or her affections known to you. If you feel the same, congratulations — you've made a love connection! If not, an honest discussion will restore the balance.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

Snuggle up to your sweetheart. You feel a close emotional bond to your partner, which reassures you you're headed in the right direction. Single fish could find late-night romance at a social gathering near the sea.

Creators Syndicate

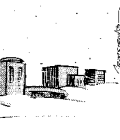
Holiday Mathis



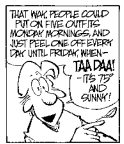
Calvin and Hobbes



Jump Start



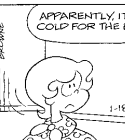
Zits



Cathy



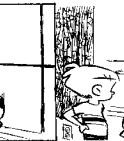
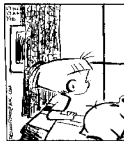
Hi and Lois



Beetle Bailey



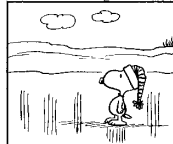
Red and Rover



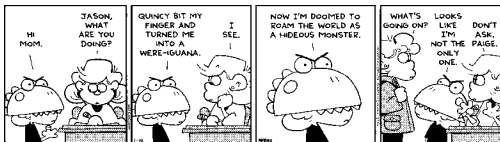
Better or Worse



Peanuts



Fotrot



B.C.



Baby Blues



Spider Man



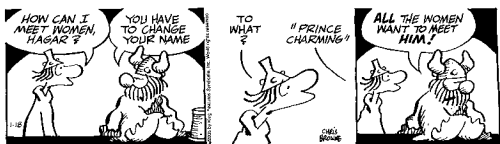
Blondie



Dilbert



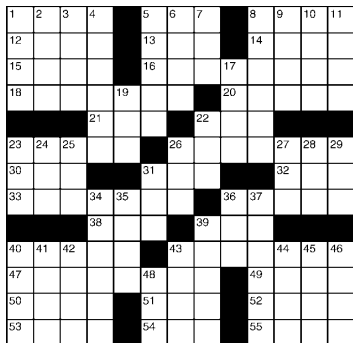
Hagar



Garfield



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



Across

- Solipist's subject
- Nonclergy
- Rebuff a masher
- Sandbox toy
- Work with
- City in California
- Beige
- Parlor game
- Willy Wonka's heir
- Zoo howler
- Cerise
- Itty-bitty
- Worships
- Plaintiff's claims
- Enthusiast
- Rotation duration
- Demographics datum
- Allyssa Milano series
- Star of many westerns?
- Lubricant
- Turf
- Dieter's entree
- Ben-Hur's ride
- Special appeal
- Between jobs
- Top-notch
- Spot on a domino
- Dorothy's income
- Went blond
- Fir feller
- Labels

Down

- Detail, for short
- Apiece
- Turkish money
- Hardly a blizzard
- Intelligible
- Arthur of tennis
- Verily
- Buff, to vampires
- Ore deposit
- Port of Yemen
- Tower city
- Comical Caroline
- "Miserables"
- Wherefore
- Cpl.'s subordinate
- "Go, team!"
- Literary collection
- Scoundrel
- Wander about
- Early bird?
- Witness
- N.J. neighbor
- Believed
- Skirt length
- Feathery accessory
- Unanchored
- Form
- Great amount
- "Hi, sailor!"
- Broadway's Max
- Bialystok
- M minus XCI
- Notion
- Couturier
- Cassini
- Hardy heroine
- Resort

Answer to Previous Puzzle



I-18

CRYPTOQUIP

JTIB D RWICIGQB VDEGDWIR
 QP SMBBIE, JQLCS MG OI
 D RLEI OIG GTDG TI

VEIPIER EMOR?

Yesterday's Cryptquip: IF YOU PUT A SOFT COVER OVER A SALAD VEGETABLE, I GUESS IT COULD BE A CELERY CAP.

Today's Cryptquip Clue: G equals T

Love can work second time around

Dear Abby: "Divorced but Still in Love" asked if it was possible for a couple who had been divorced to make a go of marriage the second time around. You replied that it is possible, if the couple is willing (with the help of a marriage counselor) to confront the issues that broke them up the first time.

The same thing happened to me and my husband, "John." We were married at 18 and had a child at 21. We were both immature and too young to be married. After our divorce, we still spent time together as a family.

Two years later, I met and married "George." George and I had a child together, but he was not a good husband or father. Several months after I divorced George, John and I rekindled our relationship. We have been together for almost five years.

married for 3½ years and are blissfully happy together. John is a wonderful father to both boys and doesn't play favorites. I know it can work the second time around; our marriage is proof of it.

— Older and Wiser, Tabor City, N.C.

Dear Abby



Dear Older and Wiser: Congratulations to you both.

Sometimes people fail to appreciate the value of what they have until it's gone. Read on:

Dear Abby: My husband and I were married at 19. In first grade, I would kick him in the shins and then run like the dickens because I "liked" him. My first kiss was from him on my 16th birthday. After four years of separating and getting back together, he said enough is enough and filed for divorce.

Almost a year to the day our

divorce was final, we remarried and have not been sorry. (We had continued to see each other and I became pregnant.) While I don't recommend having a relationship like ours, we have been happy with our decision. Counseling would have been a great help, but we were too stubborn to get it even after we remarried. Long story short, we have been through a lot over the years — even almost divorcing again — but we're more in love than ever. With love and faith, we seem to get through it.

— Still in Love, Whittier, Calif.

Dear Still in Love: I'm pleased things are working out for the two of you — but the next time you hit a rough patch, please reconsider counseling. It could save you both a lot of wear and tear on the spirit.

Letters for this column — with your name and phone number — should be addressed to Dear Abby, P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles CA 90069. Readers can e-mail to Abby on the Internet at <http://www.uxpress.com/dearabby> or by fax to <http://www.uxpress.com/dearabby>.

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

HURTT

LEXIE

REFIHE

FRIPOT

Answer here:

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion



WHAT INNING DID THEY PASS THE BOTTLE AROUND?

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: PIECE MINUS NOUGAT BANISH
Answer: This can curl your hair at a beauty salon — GOSSIP

Friend's lies troublesome, illegal

Dear Annie: I am in a sticky situation with a longtime friend, "Joe," and his wife, "June." June is a pathological liar. She tells big ones and small ones, and her lying has caused some conflicts in their marriage, and now in our friendship with Joe. June recently skipped out on a big bill she accumulated by saying their child needed an organ transplant. People in the neighborhood are concerned for the family's welfare, and they are rallying around, putting together fruit baskets and raising money. Of course, their child isn't sick at all and never was.

Other than this, Joe and June are great people, and we've had many good times over the years. I don't want June's lying to come between our friendship. Joe has never mentioned his wife's fabrications, and we suspect it hasn't occurred to him that her tall tales get back to us. We hate

Annie's Mailbox



seeing him oblivious to what she is doing. We no longer trust her, and it is increasingly uncomfortable to be around her.

Do we tell Joe what we know? Should our children still be able to play with theirs?

— Concerned Friends in Illinois

Dear Friends: Taking money donated for her child's "transplant" puts June squarely in the criminal-fraud division. She can be arrested.

June needs therapy, and soon. If you are certain of your facts, confront June and tell her she needs help. If she refuses, talk to Joe. Yes, it may damage the friendship, but it sounds as if that's going south anyway, and this is too serious to ignore. As for the children, unless they are following in Mom's footsteps, there is no reason they cannot continue to play with yours.

Dear Annie: I read with interest the letter from "K.B.," the woman whose dentist and doctor had given up on her problems with temporomandibular joint pain. TMJD is complex, and management includes a comprehensive exam and diagnosis, addressing all possible contributing factors. K.B. should ask her dentist for a referral to a center that specializes in chronic pain or a dental school that does research in TMJD.

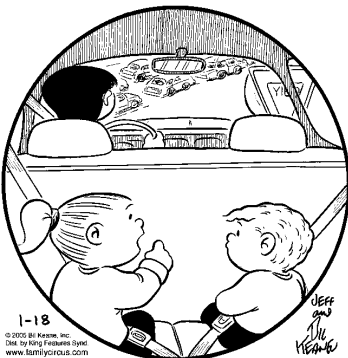
— Claire E. Collins, D.M.D., University of Colorado School of Dentistry

Dear Dr. Collins: Thank you for your expert advice. For information on TMJ, we recommend The TMJ Association (tmj.org), P.O. Box 26770, Milwaukee, WI 53226-0770. We heard from hundreds of readers, many of whom had their own suggestions.

Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar, longtime editors of the Am Lat column. Please e-mail your questions to anniesmailbox@comcast.net, or write to: Annie's Mailbox, c/o Creators Syndicate, 5777 W. Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90045.

Creators Syndicate

Family Circus



"Don't talk, Jeffy. Mommy needs quiet when she's emerging into traffic."

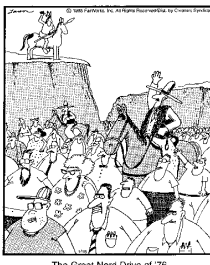


Dennis the Menace



© Gary Larson

The Far Side



Non Sequitur



Desperate Wolfpack hang on to snap skid

The Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — With the game slipping away, and quite possibly the season, Iliyan Evtimov caught a pass from Engin Asur at the right time in just the right spot for North Carolina State.

"All the credit goes to him," Evtimov said. "He got me the ball."

Evtimov made that clutch three-pointer on his way to 17 points, and N.C. State beat No. 8 Georgia Tech 76-68 on Sunday night to snap a four-game losing streak.

Five players scored in double figures for the Wolfpack (11-5, 1-2 Atlantic Coast Conference), who hadn't won since narrowly getting by Columbia last month. Cameron Bennerman finished with 16 points, and

Hodge had 12 of his 14 in the second half, but Evtimov scored the biggest points.

Men's Top 25 roundup

The Yellow Jackets (11-4, 2-2) scored 12 straight to get to 64-61, and N.C. State patiently ran its Princeton-style offense until Evtimov got an open look from beyond the arc. He swished the jumper to increase the margin to six with 2:14 left, and the Wolfpack hung on from there.

"I just did what I'm supposed to do," Evtimov said. "The pass came on time, on target, and I just have to make it."

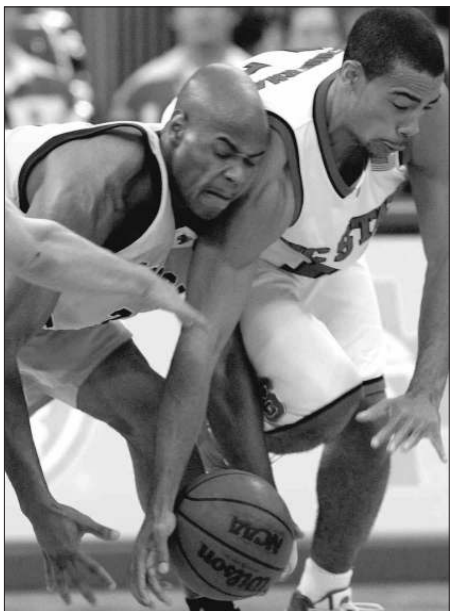
With a road trip to Virginia Tech and Maryland looming, another loss would have left N.C. State 0-3 in the conference for the first time in four seasons.

"We looked pretty desperate to me," Hodge said. "We just went out and gave it our all. We got the win, and I love to win, so I don't even want to talk about the past now."

With point guard Tony Bethel already on the sidelines with colitis, the Wolfpack didn't have senior Lev Watkins (flu) for this one. That left them with eight scholarship players, and only seven played.

It was enough, with freshmen Andrew Brackman and Gavin Grant taking advantage of the increased playing time. Brackman scored 12 points — including nine of the first 11 for N.C. State — and added six blocks, and Grant had a career-high 13 points.

Jack had 16 points and Isma'il Muhammad added 12 for Georgia Tech, which still missed guard B.J. Elder. He sat out his



Georgia Tech's Jarrett Jack, left, battles with N.C. State's Cameron Bennerman for a loose ball during the second half on Sunday. The Wolfpack ended their four-game losing streak.

fourth straight game with a sore left hamstring, leaving the team without its second-leading scorer.

Without him, the Yellow Jackets lost for

the second time in five days during a trip to Tobacco Road. They were routed 91-69 at North Carolina earlier this week.

"B.J. is definitely one our best players,

and you can't say that his absence doesn't make a difference when we are out on the court," coach Phil Hewitt said. "At the same time, we know we have the personnel to win this game."

At least this one was a bit more competitive. After Hodge made two free throws to give N.C. State a 64-49 lead, Georgia Tech rallied, thanks to some heads-up coaching from Hewitt.

Hodge got that chance at the line after drawing an offensive foul from Jack, and during a timeout minutes later, Hewitt lobbed hard with referees Reggie Cofer and Terry Moore that Hodge simply flopped.

It worked. On the next Wolfpack possession, Hodge fell out of bounds after a shove from Jack but no foul was called, giving the ball to the Yellow Jackets.

They took advantage of the opportunity, using that 12-0 run to get within three. Jack started the run with the playground maneuver, throwing an inbound pass off the back of Jordan Collins and then scoring as he was fouled.

Muhammad followed with consecutive baskets, including a reverse dunk, to make it 64-61 before Evtimov made his three.

"Playing hard defense and somebody hits a three-pointer, it makes you want to shut down in a way," Georgia Tech point guard Jarrett Jack said. "But we fought hard to the end."

No. 5 Duke 80, Virginia 66: At Durham, N.C. J.J. Redick scored 20 of his 28 points in the second half to help Duke beat Virginia.

Shelden Williams added 16 points, 11 rebounds and nine blocks for the Blue Devils (13-0, 3-0 Atlantic Coast Conference).

Sean Singletary scored 19 points to lead the Cavaliers (9-5), who fell to 0-4 in the league for the first time since the 1998-99 season.

No. 13 Boston College 73, West Virginia 53: Jared Dudley scored 21 points and Craig Smith added 20 in the Eagles' eighth straight road win.

The Eagles (14-0, 3-0 Big East), one of four unbeaten teams in Division I, extended the best start in school history and won their first three conference games for the first time under eighth-year coach Al Skinner.

Mike Gansey scored 14 points for West Virginia (11-3, 1-2), which has lost three of four after starting the season 10-0.

Badgers' rally extends home streak

The Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. — Wisconsin coach Bo Ryan credited the crowd with helping to keep the Badgers' home winning streak alive.

Kam Taylor scored the go-ahead basket with 37.3 seconds left and Wisconsin scored the final 11 points Sunday, beating No. 15 Michigan State 62-59 and extending the longest home winning streak in Division I to 38 games.

Ryan called the crowd the "factor" and said the fans were the loudest he had ever heard at the Kohl Center.

The Badgers (12-3, 3-1 Big Ten) rallied from an eight-point deficit in the final 1:55.

"We sucked in some of that energy," Ryan said. "It's encouraging to our players. The fans really hung with us on that one."

Clayton Hanson scored 15 points and Sharif Chambliss had 14 to lead Wisconsin, which improved to 26-0 in Big Ten home games under Ryan. Mike Wilkinson added 12 points, including four during the closing run.

"We got down by eight and there's some places I know where I've seen people start to leave a game because they wanted to beat the traffic," Ryan said. "If they left [today], I don't know where the extra noise came from."

Ryan improved to 6-0 against Michigan State coach Tom Izzo.

T-shirts circulating in Wisconsin this week read, "Bo 5, Izzo 0," and Izzo grew tired of talking about the Spartans' losing streak to the Badgers.

"They look on the bright side, some short guy can now put 6 and make some money," Izzo said.

Paul Davis scored 20 points to

lead Michigan State (10-3, 2-1), which had its 53-game home winning streak snapped by the Badgers on Jan. 12, 2002. For a while Sunday, it appeared the Spartans would return the favor.

Davis hit a jumper with 2:49 left to give Michigan State a 59-51 lead, its biggest in a game it led much of the way. But Wisconsin began to chip away as Chambliss hit his fourth three-pointer with 1:55 left, making it 59-54. Wilkinson then hit a pair of free throws with 1:39 left and two more with 1:14 left to make it 59-58.

Taylor gave the Badgers the lead with a runner in the lane with 37.3 seconds left. Zach Morley made two free throws with 9.3 seconds remaining to push Wisconsin's lead to 62-59, and Shannon Brown's three-pointer in the closing seconds circled the rim before missing.

"I shot it so good," Brown said.



Wisconsin's Kam Taylor reacts after scoring the go-ahead basket against Michigan State with 37.3 seconds left in the game on Sunday.

"It went in and then out. It felt good coming off my hand," Hanson, who hit five of seven Wisconsin 11 three-pointers, thought Brown's shot was good.

"All the games and crazy things that happen just kind of flash through your head. It bounced around and I thought for sure, overtime," Hanson said.

First-place Sonics finding that their options are open

BY JIM COUR

The Associated Press

SEATTLE — Luke Ridnour is giving the Seattle SuperSonics another viable scoring option in Rashard Lewis' absence.

Ridnour scored a career-high 18 points as the Sonics overtook the third Cleveland Cavaliers in the third quarter and then held them off in the fourth period for a 105-97 victory Sunday night.

Ridnour, who came to the NBA last year after playing three seasons at Oregon, scored eight of his points in the fourth quarter, including six free throws in the final minute. The win was Seattle's second straight without Lewis, who's sidelined with tendinitis in his left knee.

"It was just a game that we needed to get without Rashard," Ridnour said. "This was a big win for our team."

LeBron James had 35 points on 14-for-30 shooting and 11 assists, while Drew Gooden finished with 27 points for Cleveland.

Ray Allen, who led the Sonics with 27 points, told James the Cavs were fouling the wrong player.

"At the end of the game, they're keeping me from going to the free-throw line and shooting free throws, but I've got Luke who shoots as well or better percentage-wise," Allen said. "I told LeBron, 'You should be double-teaming Luke and let me come to the ball because he shoots it better than I do.' So you've got to pick your poison."

Ridnour said all nine free throw attempts he took in the game, which improved the first-place Sonics' record to 27-9.

"As a team, we're a pretty good free-throw shooting team," he said. "So when it comes down to the line, you want to be able to knock them down."

Vladimir Radmanovic had 23 points and 11 rebounds, while Antonio Daniels, starting in place of Lewis, had 15 points.

The Sonics outrebounded the Cavs 50-31.

"That was big," Sonics coach



SuperSonics guard Ray Allen (34) goes up for a shot as the Cavaliers' Zydrunas Ilgauskas defends during the second quarter in Seattle.

Nate McMillan said. "We scored more second-chance points, and I thought that was the difference in the game."

Allen said the play of Radmanovic — one of Seattle's primary reserves — was the key to the Sonics' win, their fourth in five games.

"Vlade has a focus about him that he knows he's being counted on," Allen said. "He knows he's going to get shots. He's a big weapon for us."

James, making his second trip to Seattle, agreed with Allen.

"They got a great contribution off the bench from Vladimir," he said. "I've been watching what he's doing all year and we knew he can shoot the ball real well. He's a threat to any team that comes in here."

Allen, the league's No. 7 scorer, had seven points in the fourth quarter to help hold off the Cavs.

Allen drove the baseline and hit a 5-footer with 1:38 remaining,

giving Seattle a 94-88 lead, then equaled James' three-pointer with one of his own with 1:12 left to put the Sonics up 97-91.

"The fourth quarter is my time, I feel," Allen said. "Whether I make a shot or not, I'm going to do something. I'm going to be heard or seen in the fourth quarter."

Raptors 102, Hornets 99: At Toronto, Chris Bosh had 24 points, 10 rebounds and two key blocks down the stretch for the Raptors.

New Orleans point guard Baron Davis led late in the third quarter with a bruised right ankle and did not return.

Lee Nailon scored a career-high 32 points for the Hornets but missed two shots and had two blocked by Bosh in the final three minutes.

Morris Peterson had 25 points and 10 rebounds for the Raptors, who are 7-7 since trading Vince Carter to New Jersey on Dec 17.

NBA scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	17	19	.472	—
Boston	17	20	.459	1 1/2
Philadelphia	16	20	.444	4
Toronto	15	23	.395	3
New Jersey	12	24	.333	5
Southeast Division				
Miami	28	11	.718	—
Washington	22	13	.629	4
Orlando	20	16	.556	6
Charlotte	8	25	.242	17
Atlanta	7	27	.206	18 1/2
Central Division				
Cleveland	22	14	.611	—
Detroit	12	24	.611	9
Indiana	18	17	.514	3 1/2
Chicago	16	19	.471	6
Milwaukee	12	23	.343	9 1/2

Western Conference

Southwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
San Antonio	30	9	.769	—
Dallas	23	12	.657	5
Houston	20	17	.541	9
Memphis	20	18	.526	9
New Orleans	5	31	.139	23 1/2
Northwest Division				
Seattle	27	9	.750	—
Minnesota	19	17	.528	8
Denver	15	21	.417	12
Portland	15	21	.417	12
Utah	13	26	.333	15 1/2
Pacific Division				
Phoenix	31	7	.816	—
Sacramento	24	11	.686	5 1/2
L.A. Lakers	20	15	.571	9 1/2
L.A. Clippers	18	18	.500	17
Golden State	22	22	.500	20

Sunday's games

Toronto 102, New Orleans 99

Seattle 105, Cleveland 97

Monday's games

Chicago at New York

Milwaukee at Charlotte

New Jersey at Atlanta

New Orleans at Philadelphia

Phoenix at Detroit

Sacramento at L.A. Clippers

Washington at San Antonio

Toronto at Minnesota

Atlanta at Memphis

Utah at L.A. Lakers

Denver at Golden State

Tuesday's games

Detroit at Orlando

Indiana at Houston

Washington at Dallas

Denver at Seattle

Portland at Sacramento

Wednesday's games

Chicago at Boston

Portland at Toronto

Philadelphia at Charlotte

Atlanta at Miami

Milwaukee at New Jersey

Indiana at New Orleans

L.A. Clippers at San Antonio

Phoenix at Phoenix

Cleveland at Portland

Minnesota at L.A. Lakers

Sunday

Raptors 102, Hornets 99

NEW ORLEANS — Nailon 34-10-4-2, Rogers 14-8-0-3, Brown 37-3-6-9, Smith 61-3-17-10, Allen 15-5-10-2, Peterson 7-12-6-6, Dickau 24-2-7, Nachbar 0-2-1-2-1. Totals 102-99.

TORONTO — E. Williams 0-4-0-0, Bosh 7-16-12-24, Arado 12-0-2, Peterson 7-12-6-6, 25, Alston 41-5-13, Marshall 31-2-25, Rose 15-5-18, Murray 13-0-3, Bomer 4-5-0-0, Palacios 0-3-0-0, Woods 0-0-0-0, Asa Williams 1-0-0-0. Totals 27-26-31-102.

New Orleans 25 21 36-122-99

Three-point Goals—New Orleans 8-29

(Davis 3, Smith 3, Rogers 4, Dickau 1, Nachbar 1)

Rebounds—New Orleans 5-7, Rogers 5-7, Nachbar 5-1, Toronto 10-18 (Peterson 5-7, Rose 2-4, Murray 1-1, Bomer 1-1, Marshall 1-2, Alston 1-2, Williams 1-2, Nachbar 1-2)

Assists—New Orleans 5-7, Rogers 5-7, Nachbar 1-2, Williams 1-2, Alston 1-2, Peterson 1-2, Dickau 1-2, Nachbar 1-2, Woods 1-2, Asa Williams 1-2

Steals—Nailon, Toronto Defensive Three Seconds 14-42 (15-80)

Sonics 105, Cavaliers 97

CLEVELAND — Gooden 21-13-9-10-27, L. James 14-8-4-5-3, Ilgauskas 37-5-8-11, Radmanovic 11-4-4-22, Murray 0-0-0-0, Fortson 3-13-5, Traylor 0-0-0-0, Harris 3-7-0-4, Snow 1-2-0-2, Pavlovic 1-2-0-2. Totals 97-105.

Seattle 24 21 20-105-97

Three-point Goals—Seattle 3-13

(L. James 1-7, Harris 0-0, Ilgauskas 0-3, Snow 1-2, Nachbar 1-2, Murray 0-2)

Rebounds—Cleveland 48 (Newble 8), Seattle 35 (Radmanovic 11, Gooden 10)

Assists—Cleveland 22 (James 11, Seattle 18 (Daniels 6), Total 50)

Steals—Cleveland 31, Seattle 18 (Daniels 6, Gooden 3, Newble, James, A-17-072 (17-072))

NBA calendar

Feb. 19-20 — All-Star weekend, Denver.

Feb. 24 — Trading deadline, 3 p.m. EST.

April 9 — Regular season ends.

April 23 — Playoffs begin.

June 7-8 — NBA draft, Las Vegas.

June 9 — Earliest possible NBA Finals start date.

June 21 — Early entry draft with withdrawal deadline.

June 23 — Latest possible NBA Finals start date.

June 28 — NBA Draft, New York.

Wizards' Hughes to miss 4-6 weeks

BY JOSEPH WHITE

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — NBA steals leader Larry Hughes was diagnosed Sunday with a broken right thumb and will miss four to six weeks, the first real crisis to hit a Washington Wizards team off to its best start in decades.

Hughes was hurt when off his thumb was hit by Quentin Richardson while driving for a layup in the final minutes of Saturday night's victory over the Phoenix Suns.

"This is a difficult loss for our team," coach Eddie Jordan said. "We certainly feel for Larry, who has played a big part in our team's success. We have confidence in our team to overcome a setback like this."

Hughes is one of the so-called Big Three, along with Antawn Jamison and Gilbert Arenas, who have led the Wizards (22-13) to seven straight wins in their best start since the 1978-79 season.

Hughes isn't the only NBA player averaging more than 20 points (21.2, five rebounds (6.1), five assists (5.2) and 2.2 steals per game) all career highs for the seventh-year player from Saint Louis.

"I am very disappointed that this happened, but I have full confidence that my teammates will play while I'm out," Hughes said. "I look forward to getting back as soon as possible."

The Wizards have entered a difficult part of the schedule, with a two-game road trip to Texas and road games against Indiana and Cleveland in eight days. Without a consistent low-post scoring threat, the team had regularly needed each of the Big Three to contribute every game.

Now it's a Big Two plus Juan Dixon, who is expected to start in Hughes' spot at shooting guard. Dixon has played well in the past two games, scoring 13 points against Milwaukee and 26 against Phoenix. Anthony Peeler and Laron Profit would back up Dixon.

The Wizards have been victims of bad timing and bad luck since the 1980s. Last season was derailed by long-term injuries to Hughes, Arenas and Jerry Stackhouse.

NBA fines Alston

NEW YORK — Toronto Raptors guard Rafer Alston was fined \$7,500 by the NBA on Sunday for verbally abusing a game official Friday night in Philadelphia.

Alston had 11 points and 13 assists in Toronto's 106-96 loss to the 76ers.

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Top seeds will play for conference titles

BY BARRY WILNER

The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — The Philadelphia Eagles have been here often. It's not where they want to stay.

The Eagles advanced to their fourth straight NFC championship game Sunday with a 27-14 rout past the inept Minnesota Vikings.

They will also host their third conference title game in a row, a league record, when they meet Atlanta on Sunday. The Falcons routed St. Louis 47-17 on Saturday.

For the next week, Eagles fans will bring their hands, furrow their brows and deal with the angst of Philadelphia's last three failed attempts to make their first Super Bowl since 1981.

"We are excited about this win, but we are excited about moving on," Donovan McNabb said after throwing two touchdown passes.

The AFC championship match-

up is a rematch of a Halloween game in Pittsburgh, when the Steelers beat the Patriots. This weekend, New England took apart Indianapolis 20-3 and Pittsburgh survived against the New York Jets 20-17 in overtime.

In October, Pittsburgh won 34-20 to end the Patriots' record 21-game winning streak. The Patriots beat the host Steelers in the 2001 AFC title game, then won their first two Super Bowls in the last three years.

"We played our best 30 minutes of football in the second half," coach Bill Belichick said of Sunday's domination of Indianapolis and league MVP Peyton Manning. "Ran the ball, converted third downs, played good defense."

The Eagles are 4½-point favorites, while the visiting Patriots are 3-point favorites. Both games feature the top two seeds in each conference.

NFC

The last time the Falcons (12-5)

met the Eagles (14-3) in the postseason two years ago, Philadelphia won a night game 20-6.

Back then, the Falcons were coached by Dan Reeves and were coming off a historic victory at Green Bay, the first time to win a postseason road game against the Packers. These Falcons have the NFL's top rushing offense, with quarterback Michael Vick and RBs Warrick Dunn and T.J. Duckett, and new coach Jim Mora has revamped and revitalized the defense.

"This is a totally different team than was here, with a different feel and a different look," Pro Bowl linebacker Keith Brooking said. "But it is in the sense that we are making plays when we need to."

Philadelphia has made the big plays all season and did so again Sunday even without All-Pro receiver and sparkplug Terrell Owens.

The Eagles play the run pretty well, but do they have the right

personnel to deal with the mercenary Vick?

"They're doing a good job with ball control," All-Pro safety Brian Dawkins said, "so we're going to have our hands full, especially with their quarterback."

And how well can the Eagles protect McNabb against a defense that pressures quarterbacks so well?

"We're confident and loose," said do-everything running back Brian Westbrook. "We don't have any reason not to be loose."

AFC

Judging by their play this week-end, the Patriots (15-2) seem ready for another Super Bowl trip, and the Steelers (16-1) seem lucky to be alive.

"It definitely tests your faith," running back Duce Staley said after the close call.

But Pittsburgh was plucky enough to survive, and understating such a well-coached and physical team would be a mistake.

The Steelers will need their hard-driving running game featuring Staley and Jerome Bettis to be at its peak. Offensive Rookie of the Year Ben Roethlisberger struggled against the Jets, and the Patriots bring even more confusing looks and experience in pressure games.

Not that coach Bill Cowher fears Roethlisberger has been unmasked.

"Ben is unflappable. He does display a calmness. . . . You still have a sense that he's going to get it done," Cowher said.

It's the same sense everyone should have about New England, which was supposed to have problems matching up with the high-flying Colts. The nasty weather certainly helped the Patriots, but if the game had been played on the Jacksonville beach in August, it might not have mattered.

"We rattled them all game," linebacker Tedy Bruschi said. "That's what we do best."

Steelers look to capitalize on second shot

BY ALAN ROBINSON

The Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Ben Roethlisberger made enough mistakes to fill a blooper show, and perhaps even stirred doubts among Steelers veterans who have believed in him so strongly all season.

Just when the imperfect-but-unbeaten rookie seemed to have run out of ways and big plays to keep his winning streak going, he somehow got the Steelers to another Sunday — and a rematch with the Patriots.

Unlike Jets kicker Doug Brien, whose twin misses doomed New York on Saturday, Roethlisberger plans to make something of his second chance.

"It wasn't me out there," Roethlisberger said after the Steelers beat the Jets 20-17 in overtime and advanced to Sunday's AFC championship game against New England. "It was tough going, and I did everything I could to lose the game."

Not that Roethlisberger knows much about losing. He is 14-0 in the NFL and has won 27 in a row dating to last season at Miami of Ohio, though he admittedly was "much sicker than good."

"This was terrible," he said. Bill Cowher didn't disagree with that assessment, though the Steelers coach said, "Ben is unflappable. He does display a calmness. . . . You still have a sense that he's going to get it done."

Now Roethlisberger will try to become the first rookie QB to lead his team to the Super Bowl — the Steelers will host the AFC title game for the fifth time in 11 seasons. They have won their last seven wild-card or divisional home playoff games, but are 1-3 in AFC championship games under Cowher, losing to San Diego (1994), Denver (1997) and New England (2001).

The Steelers beat the Patriots 34-20 on Oct. 31, seizing a 24-3 lead in ending New England's record 21-game winning streak. Now, the Patriots have a chance to end Pittsburgh's 15-game run, which trails only the unbeaten 1972 Dolphins' 17-game streak as the longest in one season.



Steelers running back Jerome Bettis fumbles early in the fourth quarter of Sunday's divisional playoff game, killing a Pittsburgh drive.

There are other streaks at stake, too — Roethlisberger's unbeaten run and Patriots quarterback Tom Brady's 7-0 record in the postseason.

The Steelers (15-1 during the season) gained home field over the Patriots (14-2) because of their earlier victory. It's the first time in AFC championship game history that each finalist has no more than two losses, though such a matchup occurred in the January 1999 NFC final pairing Minnesota (15-1) and Atlanta (14-2).

Roethlisberger made the kind of errors a rookie quarterback is supposed to make in the playoffs Saturday: an interception that was returned for a touchdown and another that led to the second of Brien's two missed field goals in the final 2 minutes of the fourth quarter.

Still, despite breakdowns that probably should have halted the Steelers' magical season, Roethlisberger led late scoring

drives that ended with his game-tying shovel pass touchdown to Hines Ward and Jeff Reed's decisive 33-yard field goal in overtime.

Roethlisberger denied his right hand is hurting, though he looked to be shaking it in pain during warmups and again wore a glove to cover it. But his denial almost seemed to be a confirmation something is wrong: "I am not going to use any excuses. It's fine."

Even if his play wasn't, Roethlisberger was 17-for-30 for 181 yards and a 57.8 passer rating in the Steelers' first overtime playoff win since they upset Houston 26-23 on Dec. 31, 1998.

"I just remembered to stay focused, stay in the game," he said.

It was mostly Brien who kept the Steelers in it. Brien missed a 47-yarder with 1:58 left in the fourth quarter and then a 43-yarder on the final play of regulation, both into the wind at the closed end of the stadium.

Heinz Field's unstable turf and shifting crosswinds have perplexed kickers since the stadium's opening in 2001. But, until Saturday, opposing kickers were 11-of-12 this season — including Brien's 2-of-2 on Dec. 12, both from beyond 40 yards.

"I don't feel bad for him because I wanted to win the game, but I feel bad for him as a kicker," Reed said.

The Steelers seemed headed for a divisional-round loss remarkably similar to their 34-31 overtime defeat at Tennessee two seasons ago. Then, the Titans' Joe Nedney missed a 31-yarder but, given a second chance when Dewayne Washington was flagged for running into the kicker, hit the game-winning 26-yarder.

Reed came away with the football he kicked to end the game. He packed securely in his duffel bag — coincidentally or not, right beside his Bible.

"It definitely tests your faith," running back Duce Staley said.

'Clock-killin' Dillon' thrives in playoff debut

BY JIMMY GOLEN
The Associated Press

FOXBORO, Mass. — This is why Corey Dillon wanted to get out of Cincinnati. It's also why the New England Patriots wanted to get him.

Dillon carried 23 times for 144 yards in his playoff debut Sunday to help the Patriots advance to the AFC championship game with a 20-3 victory over the Indianapolis Colts. The only thing between them and an aching third conference title in four years are the Pittsburgh Steelers, who beat New England on Halloween when Dillon was out with a thigh injury.

"I'm certainly glad Corey's going to be there," quarterback Tom Brady said. "I know he's glad he's here; he's told us that a bunch of times. And we're glad to have him."

Dillon played the first seven years of his career with the woeful Bengals, racking up big yards but also admitting that year after year of losing got him down. Before the Patriots traded a second-round draft pick for him in April, Dillon had to convince them that he wasn't a malcontent.

"There's not a day goes by I don't grab those guys and say, 'Thank you,'" Dillon said. "I'm serious. They'll tell you, too. They're probably a little annoyed by me doing it."



New England Patriots RB Corey Dillon (28) finds off Indianapolis Colts' Raheem Brock on a first-quarter run Sunday in Foxboro, Mass. Dillon carried 23 times for 144 yards in the Patriots' 20-3 victory over the Colts.

"I do it just to let them know I appreciate them believing in me. I'm just ecstatic about being in this situation."

New England fans let him know the feeling is mutual, chanting, "Corey! Corey!" as the clock wound down. Dillon's teammates agree: Linebacker Ted Johnson said after the game he was heading to the souvenir stand to buy a No. 28 jersey.

One teammate needed him by calling him "Clock-killin' Dillon." Another led him into the locker room by telling the waiting reporters, "Here comes the man of the hour."

Dillon has been a model citizen since joining the defenseless Super Bowl champions. He's also given the Patriots the running game they lacked even as they won two NFL titles in the previous three seasons.

"Who wouldn't be excited about having a Pro Bowl player come to your offense. He came in and worked hard. He's a great leader and he's got a great attitude," Brady said.

"I don't care what someone's reputation is. When you come to this team, you'll find in Corey a great attitude coming in, and it's just gotten better."

And so have the Patriots, who used him to replace the steady but unspectacular Antwan Smith.

Dillon ran for 1,635 yards during the regular season — a career high, a franchise record and the third-most in the NFL. His 12 rushing touchdowns were also a personal best, as were his nine games this season with 100 yards or more.

But he could have done most of that in Cincinnati. What he really came to New England for was a game like Sunday's.

"He was excited. He probably had butterflies," fullback Patrick Pass said. "We wanted a taste of what he can do through the past two of three years."

With Dillon sharing the carries

with Kevin Faulk, who ran 11 times for 36 yards on Sunday, the Patriots didn't have to rely on Brady as much while milking the clock with 14-, 15- and 16-play drives.

"I think he's really going to take the pressure off Tom," Pass said. "I just knew he would have a good game. He's our go-to guy." Dillon didn't really get going until the end of the first quarter, when the Patriots took over at their own 16 and he ran on three consecutive plays to put the ball on the 36. The drive set up a field goal that gave the Patriots a 3-0 lead.

On their next possession, Dillon broke free for a 42-yard gain that gave them their only yardage of the drive before Vianini made it 6-0. Dillon ran six times for 26 yards to help set up the third-quarter touchdown that gave New England a 13-3 lead.

Then the Patriots tried to protect, and Dillon was just the one to do it.

Starting on their own six with 14:34 left in the game, the Patriots moved to the Colts' 28 before Dillon ran into a pack, changed direction and then broke free around the left side. He dove at the pylon but was ruled out of bounds at the 1; Brady's sneak made it 20-3.

Dillon also led the Patriots with five catches, though they only went for seven yards.

49ers hire Ravens' Noan as head coach

BY GREG BEACHAM
The Associated Press

SANTA CLARA, Calif. — Baltimore defensive coordinator Mike Nolan accepted the San Francisco 49ers' head coaching position Monday and began to negotiate a contract to take over the team that had the NFL's worst record last season.

Nolan, a longtime coordinator for four teams who has replaced Dennis Erickson, first earlier in the month after going 9-23 in two seasons out of the playoffs. San Francisco went 2-14 this season.

After wowing 49ers owner John York in an interview Thursday, Nolan accepted the offer Monday and flew to York's home in Ohio to work out a contract.

"[York] had a good strong list of candidates, and they felt that Mike was the perfect candidate to lead us into the future," 49ers spokesman Kirk Reynolds said.

Nolan earned the chance to follow in the footsteps of his father, Dick, who went 54-53-5 in eight seasons as the 49ers' coach from 1968-75, winning three straight division championships and reaching two NFC title games while getting the first playoff wins in franchise history.

Mike Nolan, 45, has been in charge of the Ravens' powerful defense since 2001, following stints as the coordinator with the New York Jets (2000), Washington (1997-99) and the New York Giants (1993-96). Baltimore

ranked sixth in the NFL in total defense last season.

General manager Terry Donahue was fired along with Erickson, and Nolan will have a hand in picking Donahue's successor as York rebuilds the once-proud franchise, which will have the top pick in the next draft.

York, who didn't return a call seeking comment, has said he planned to hire a coach with broad powers, supplemented by a general manager who concentrates on salary cap issues.

Nolan will be the 15th head coach in 49ers history.

Nolan was interviewed by York and the two of them reviewed members of the 49ers' front office. He was offered the job Mon-

day morning, beating out four other candidates: New England defensive coordinator Romeo Crennel, who was thought to be Cleveland's top choice; Giants defensive coordinator Tim Lewis; and Tennessee coordinators Mike Peterson and Jim Schwartz.

Southern California coach Pete Carroll, thought to be York's top choice after he fired Erickson, apparently was never contacted by the 49ers after initially saying he wasn't interested.

Nolan is a protégé of Dan Reeves, who hired the former Oregon coach for his first NFL job with the Denver Broncos in 1987. He was a hot candidate for several head coaching spots in recent years, but his star faded slightly until the 49ers became interested.

Pats: Colts fail to win again at Foxboro

PATS, FROM BACK PAGE

kept Manning on the sideline while Brady threw for one touchdown, ran for another and completed 18 passes in 27 attempts for 144 yards.

"I'm not recognizing my last seven seasons right now," said Dillon, who spent them with Cincinnati. "It's all about this year."

New England (15-2) led 6-0 on Adam Vianini's field goals of 24 and 31 yards in the second quarter with the first one capped by a 16-play, 78-yard march that lasted 9 minutes, 7 seconds.

"We played our best 30 minutes of football in the second half," Belichick said. "Ran the ball, converted 73 downs, played good defense."

Indianapolis (13-5) scored on Mike Vanderjag's 23-yard field goal on the last play of the first half.

"We just ran into a better team today," Colts coach Tony Dungy said. "That's one thing about New England. They find a way to win. We felt pretty good sitting 6-3 at the half."

When Brady threw a 5-yard scoring pass to David Givens to cap a third-quarter drive that lasted 8:16, Manning had to make his remaining possessions count against the hard-hitting defense.

And Brady followed with a 94-yard drive that ended with his 1-yard touchdown run.

Facing 20-3 deficit with 7:10 left, there was little that even Manning could do.

The Patriots proved once again they could win without their best defenders. Pro Bowl defensive lineman Richard Seymour was sidelined with a knee injury, and starting cornerbacks Ty Law and Tyrone Poole are on injured reserve.

But the Patriots' defense still stifled the fifth-highest scoring team in NFL history.

"It was just the best game plan that we've had since I've been here," Patriots safety Rodney Harrison said.

Belichick had nothing but praise for his makeshift second line.

"They played very well. There's nothing magical. They rushed them. They jammed them. They tackled them. They converted them," he said.

The season ended for the Colts right where it started. They lost the opener in Foxboro 27-24 when Vanderjag missed a 24-yard field goal attempt in the final minute. The Colts have now lost six straight to New England and nine straight in Foxboro.

And for the Patriots, the road to the Super Bowl once again runs through Pittsburgh, where they won the AFC title in 2002.

Ex-Raider Robbins critically wounded by police

The Associated Press

MIAMI BEACH, Fla. — Former Oakland Raiders center Barrett Robbins was shot and critically wounded during a struggle with a police officer investigating a burglary at a South Beach office building.

Robbins, a former All-Pro known best for going AWOL during the 2003 Super Bowl and other erratic behavior, was hospitalized in critical condition.

Robbins was shot several times in the torso during a "violent struggle" with a Miami Beach detective Sunday night, police spokesman Bobby Hernandez said.

The officer was later fighting for his life, trying to get Mr. Robbins from getting his gun. That's when the shots rang out," Hernandez said.

Robbins, 31, was confronted in a second-floor office in a building that also houses a nightclub, gym and jewelry store. He was considered a burglary suspect, though no charges had been filed, Hernandez said.

"We just have to figure out what he was doing there," Hernandez said.

Hernandez said authorities had not been able to interview Robbins, but that the former offensive lineman was expected to face a charge of battery on a police officer. Hernandez also said police were trying to determine whether he would face trespassing or burglary charges.

Detective Mike Cresley, who fired the shots, had minor head injuries from the scuffle and was treated at a hospital and released.

Robbins was taken to Ryder Trauma Cen-

ter at Jackson Memorial Hospital. Hernandez did not immediately have Robbins' condition Sunday, and a hospital official did not immediately return a page.

Robbins was arrested last month in San Francisco for hitting a security guard at a night club.

The often-troubled player is best remembered for disappearing the night before the 2003 Super Bowl in San Diego. He spent Super Bowl Sunday in a hospital and later acknowledged that he had stopped taking his medicine for depression and bipolar disorder.

The Raiders lost 48-21 to Tampa Bay. Robbins was released by Oakland in July, a week after he and two other players were fined three game checks for testing positive for the steroid THG.

Moss, Minnesota mess up chances in Philly

BY DAVE CAMPBELL

The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Randy Moss had an excused absence this time.

Minnesota's star receiver was mistakenly pulled off the field for a fake field goal, and the Vikings misfired when it counted most on Sunday, squandering their chance to advance to the NFC championship game with a 27-14 loss to the Philadelphia Eagles.

"That's how football goes," quarterback Daunte Culpepper said. "You've got to be able to play mistake-free football, but if you do make mistakes you're going to be able to make up for it."

With all the pressure on their opponent in this divisional playoff game, the Vikings didn't take advantage of all the opportunities provided by an Eagles team that looked very beatable.

Culpepper threw two interceptions in Philadelphia's end of the field, and the defense committed four costly penalties, befitting the team's up-and-down, mostly disappointing season.

And then there was the botched fake, a crazy play sure to be remembered for a while by Vikings fans.

Trailing 21-7, Minnesota faced fourth-and-goal at the 3-yard line with less than five minutes remaining in the first half. As the offense awaited word, several players mentioned to coach Mike Tice to go for it.

The kicking team ran out, though. Moss — who caught flak

two weeks ago for leaving the field in frustration as the Vikings lined up for a desperation onside kick in Washington — jogged toward the sideline perpendicular to the goal line.

He stopped just before going out of bounds, however, and was ready to line up as an eligible receiver without anyone covering him.

Problem.

Backup center Cory Withrow was on the field, unaware of plans for the fake, and coaches and teammates had to yell for Moss to come off to avoid a penalty for too many men on the field.

"I didn't hear the call," Withrow said.

Holder Gus Fretotte — Culpepper's backup — took the snap, jumped up, looked left to where Moss would've been, and had no body open.

Fretotte was forced to throw the ball out of the end zone, and the Eagles took over on downs.

"We'd love to have a chance to do it again," Fretotte said. "They probably didn't even know it was coming. If we'd have thrown a touchdown, it would've been 21-14 and we would have had all the momentum. It's just one of those things."

Moss declined to comment after the game.

Minnesota, which started 5-1 before stumbling in the second half and finishing 8-8, began the season with high expectations. This talented team was in just about every game, including a 27-16 loss to Philadelphia on Monday night in September.



Minnesota Vikings' Randy Moss walks off the field after losing to the Philadelphia Eagles 27-14 in an NFC divisional playoff on Sunday.

But whether it was a withering pass defense, ill-timed turnovers or just plain dumb mistakes, the Vikings always seemed to find

more ways to hurt themselves than their opponent. This game was no different.

"At this point, we're two steps past where we were last year,"

said Culpepper, whose team finished 3-7 in 2003 and missed the playoffs by losing on the final play of an 18-17 defeat against Arizona. "Next year, if we improve two more steps we're in the championship."

Dontarrious Thomas, Willie O'Ford, Ralph Brown and Antoine Winfield were called for penalties that totaled 83 yards and led to first downs on Eagles scoring drives.

A holding penalty on Thomas gave the Eagles a first down at the Minnesota 31 midway through the first quarter after an incompletion on third-and-6. Philadelphia took a 7-0 lead four plays later.

Pass interference calls on O'Ford and Winfield helped the Eagles drive 46 yards in just 29 seconds to cut up 27-17 early in the second.

Then Brown was flagged for pass interference on Todd Pinkston early in the fourth quarter, a 46-yarder that set up a field goal by David Akers that stretched the lead to 24-7.

Culpepper, who set team records with 39 touchdowns and 4,717 yards passing this season, was flawless in last week's 31-17 win at Green Bay — throwing for four TDs without a turnover.

Against the blitz-happy Eagles and their defense led by Pro Bowlers, Culpepper was off his game — throwing interceptions on consecutive possessions in the third quarter when the Vikings still had a chance to come back.

Eagles: Mitchell helps fill Owens' void

EAGLES, FROM BACK PAGE

The Eagles got plenty of help from the Vikings (9-9), who showed exactly why they lost seven of their last 10 regular-season games to back into the playoffs. Minnesota's high-powered offense couldn't handle defensive end Jevon Kearse and linebacker Jeremiah Trotter.

The inept Vikings botched a fake field goal, the defense committed four costly penalties and Culpepper turned it over twice.

Costly penalties, at the wrong time, taking some points off the board, stopping a drive, having a nice play called back — said Vikings coach Mike Tice, rattling off Minnesota's misuses. "We made some mistakes when we had a little bit of rhythm going. We didn't finish anything."

Kearse pressured and harassed Culpepper throughout the game, and Lito Sheppard, Sheldon Brown and Rod Hood held Moss to just three catches for 51 yards.

When the Vikings drove, they found ways to stay out of the secondary. An offensive lineman remained on the field instead of Moss for a fake field goal, leaving no receivers to catch holder Gus Fretotte's pass in the second quarter.

Culpepper, who had 39 TD passes and only 11 interceptions during the season, threw picks to

Reese and Trotter in Eagles territory in the third.

With Owens watching from a luxury box, Mitchell got the Eagles started, catching a 2-yard TD pass then mocking Moss' simulated moaning by pretending to pull his pants up.

Mitchell got lucky on his second TD, catching a fumble by tight end L.J. Smith in the end zone.

"I want to say 'Hi' to all my new friends out there, those people who doubted me and the receivers," said Mitchell, a former Westwood high school star for his nicknames "Hollywood," "First-dumb Freddie," "The People's Champ," and "FredEx" — than clutch catches.

Under Reid, the Eagles never lost after a bye, and the regulars basically had three weeks of non-action. It didn't hurt, and Philly led 14-0 just 44 seconds into the second quarter.

Mitchell caught his TD pass from McNabb midway in the opening period, then did his reverse moon. Greg Lewis' graceful catch of a 52-yard throw set up Brian Westbrook's 7-yard TD reception, the versatile running back's first postseason score; he was injured for last year's playoffs.

Moss, who was fined \$10,000 by the NFL for his fake moaning of the Green Bay crowd last week, ended, didn't catch his first pass until 20 minutes in. Culpepper

was sacked three times and befuddled nearly the entire game.

"You try to play mistake-free football," Culpepper said. "But when you do make mistakes, you got to do something to compensate for it."

The Vikings gained more on one second-quarter play, a 40-yard pass to Marcus Robinson, than they managed in total before that. It sparked a drive that culminated in Culpepper's 7-yard scramble to make it 14-7.

But Minnesota immediately messed up again. J.R. Reed returned the kickoff to the Vikings 46, then Minnesota was hit for two pass interference calls. From the 14, McNabb found Smith over the middle, and Smith fumbled at the 4. The ball sort directly to Mitchell, who caught it in the end zone for his second score.

"That just goes to show you things are going our way," McNabb said.

Only Mitchell's fourth-and-26 reception in the playoffs against Green Bay last January was more meaningful. That catch pretty much got the Eagles to the NFC title game, where they lost to Carolina.

Only Mitchell got a 32-yard TD reception by Robinson with 1:59 remaining. By then, the Eagles were already thinking about Vick and the Falcons. That catch pretty much got the Eagles to the NFC title game, where they lost to Carolina.

NFL scoreboard

Playoffs		INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS	
Divisional Playoffs		Rushing—Minnesota Bennett 87, Smith 7, Culpepper 5.25, Moore 1.50. Philadelphia , Westbrook 12.70, Lewis 10.35, McNabb 3.5.	
Saturday, Jan. 15		Passing—Minnesota Culpepper 24-42-216, Fretotte 0-14-0. Philadelphia McNabb 23-42-206.	
Sunday, Jan. 16		Receiving—Minnesota Robinson 5-119, Burleson 4-50, Smith 4-28, Moss 3-51, Vikings 2-26, Moore 2-26, Bennett 2-minus 11. Philadelphia Westbrook 12-70, Lewis 10-35, Mitchell 5-48, Westbrook 5-47, Smith 4-52, Kinkade 3-46, Lewis 2-64, Parry 1-17, Favre 1-5.	
Super Bowl		Missed field goals—None.	
Pro Bowl		Patriots 20, Colts 3	
Sunday, Feb. 13		Second Quarter	
At Honolulu		NE—FG Vinatieri 31, 7:50.	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		Ind—FG Vanderjig 21, 30.	
At Honolulu		Third Quarter	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		NE—Glens 5 pass from Brady (Vinatieri kick), 1:30.	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		Fourth Quarter	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		Brady 1 run (Vinatieri kick), 7:10.	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		Ind—68-76.	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		First downs	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		Ind 21	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		NE 21	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		Total Net Yards	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		Ind 276	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		NE 305	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		Passing	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		Ind 220	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		NE 215	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		Punt Returns	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		Ind 0-0	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		Kickoff Returns	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		Ind 4-84	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		NE 1-15	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		Interceptions Ret.	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		Ind 0-0	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		NE 1-1	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		Fumble—Ind	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		27-43-1	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		Sacked—Vikings Lost	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		1-68	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		3-20	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		Penalties—Ind	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		1-40	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		Penalties—Vikings	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		22-44	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		Time of Possession	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		Ind 37:35	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		NE 34:45	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		Rushing—Indianapolis James 14-89, Manning 10-52, Harrison 5-44, Brady 18-27-0-144.	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		Receiving—Indianapolis Stockley 8-64, Janis 7-50, Harrison 5-44, Wayne 3-35, Clark 2-26, Pollard 1-2, Rhodes 1-minus 2. Pittsburgh Pilon 5-17, Brown 3-18, Brown 3-18, Fauria 1-17, Rhodes 1-minus 2. New England Pilon 5-17, Brown 3-18, Brown 3-18, Fauria 1-17, Rhodes 1-minus 2. Pittsburgh Pilon 5-17, Brown 3-18, Brown 3-18, Fauria 1-17, Rhodes 1-minus 2.	
At Jacksonville, Fla.		Missed field goals—None.	

Singh birdies 18th to win Sony Open by one over Els

BY DOUG FERGUSON
The Associated Press

HONOLULU — Two weeks into a long year, Vijay Singh already was feeling the heat.

Coming off one of the greatest seasons in golf, the 41-year-old Fijian knew expectations would be higher than ever. It didn't help that last week he took triple bogey on the back nine, which ultimately cost him a chance to win the season-opening Mercedes Championships.

Singh was breathing easy late Sunday afternoon when he capped a flawless final round with a routine birdie on the 18th hole to win the Sony Open by one shot over hard-charging Ernie Els.

"Everybody thinks, 'Is he going to win again?' That could work against me," Singh said. "I think this is going to help. This is a great relief that I can start breathing again and go play more comfortable the rest of the season. I'm looking forward to the rest of it. This is what I need."

What he needed at breezy Wa-



Vijay Singh birdied No. 18 for the first time in the final round of the tournament to win the Sony Open.

iale Country Club was the perfect tee shot, and that's what he delivered.

Els had already completed his record-tying 62 with a birdie-birdie-eagle finish, the last one an 18-foot putt that allowed the Big Easy to post a score at 10 under par, tied for the lead.

The roar from the crowd after the eagle putt was so loud that it

reached Singh, who was playing the 12th hole and suddenly knew exactly what happened — and what he had to do.

"I had six holes to go. I said, 'I need a birdie without a bogey, and I think I can win it,'" Singh said.

He followed with five pars, then picked up his first birdie of the week on the par-5 18th. It wasn't easy, because Singh struggles with a draw off the tee, and anything too far to the right will run into the rough.

"To hit it where I did today, I could take another bucket of balls and not be able to hit that shot," Singh said. "I think it came out just perfect."

His utility club came up just short and 30 feet to the right, and Singh was able to use his putter from the first cut to roll the eagle putt to within 2 feet of the hole.

Singh finished at 11-under 269 for his 25th career victory, and the earliest he has won on tour.

It was a valiant bid by Els to win an unprecedented third straight Sony Open. He again missed several easy birdie putts

during the week, and even a few on Sunday, but rained with an amazing finish that kept everyone in suspense until Singh blistered his final drive.

He made a 10-foot-6 birdie on the 16th, knocked a 6-iron to within 3 feet on the 17th, then reached the 18th green with a 3-iron and holed the 18-foot eagle.

"I always felt I was going to be just a little shy," Els said.

"But I still had a great day. Vijay looked like he was playing solid. He didn't miss a fairway, a green coming in. He did what he had to do."

No one else did. Shigeaki Maruyama had a one-shot lead at the start of the final round, and a small army of Japanese fans who cheered every shot from his drives to his tap-ins. But after making a birdie at No. 10 for a one-shot lead, he caved in.

First came a wayward tee shot into the rough and behind the trees at No. 12, leading to bogey. Then came an approach that shot into the crowd on No. 14, and Maruyama had to make a 10-foot jolt to make bogey.

He never recovered, closing with a 71 to tie for third at 9-under 271 with Charles Howell III (67).

Brett Quigley stumbled early with three straight bogeys, then rallied to get a share of the lead with a 15-foot putt on the 11th hole. But he, too, struggled to find the short grass and it caught up with him on No. 14, where he made bogey. Quigley later missed a 4-foot par putt on the 17th, ending his hopes.

He wound up with a 71 and was at 8-under 272, along with Stewart Cink (65).

The Sony Open waited 20 years to get the No. 1 player in the world. Then, it treated Singh like a forgotten man until he had a lei around his neck and the trophy in his hand.

But seeing Singh's name on the leader board got everyone's attention.

"It's at the top of his swing right now," Els said. "He's swinging well, he's doing everything really good. With all that talent, he's missing it so many times."

All Singh wanted to do was remain everyone he was still there.

Rangers, 2B Soriano agree to one-year, \$7.5 million contract

The Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — All-Star second baseman Alfonso Soriano and the Texas Rangers agreed Monday to a \$7.5 million, one-year contract, a raise of \$2.1 million.

Soriano came to the Rangers in last February's trade that sent Alex Rodriguez to the New York Yankees. Soriano hit .280 with 28 homers and 91 RBIs last year, missing the last 16 games of the season because of a strained left hamstring.

Assistant general manager John Daniels said the team could speak with Soriano later about a long-term deal. Soriano is eligible for free agency after the 2006 season.

Texas has two players remaining in arbitration: outfielder Gary Matthews Jr. and right-hander

Sports briefs

Carlos Almanzar. Players and teams are set to swap proposed salaries Tuesday, with hearings to be scheduled for next month.

Matthews started 77 games, had a team-high eight outfield assists and hit .275 with 11 homers, the second-highest total in his career. Almanzar was 7-3 with a 3.72 ERA in 61 games.

RHP Armas, Nationals agree to one-year contract

WASHINGTON — Right-hander Tony Armas Jr. and the Washington Nationals agreed to a \$2.26 million, one-year contract Sunday, avoiding arbitration.

Armas is 32-41 with a 4.21 ERA

in 102 starts spanning six seasons with Montreal, including 2-4 with a 4.88 ERA in 16 starts last year. His 2003 season ended in May with surgery on his pitching shoulder, which delayed his 2004 debut until June 1.

Armas, who made \$2.1 million last year, and Nationals right-hander Tono Ohka filed for arbitration Friday. Unless they reach a deal first, Ohka and the Nationals will exchange figures Tuesday.

Twins re-sign Romero, sign free-agent infielder Munson

MINNEAPOLIS — Left-handed reliever J.C. Romero and free-agent infielder Eric Munson agreed to contracts with the Minnesota Twins on Sunday.

Romero, who was eligible for

arbitration, agreed to a two-year deal with a club option for a third, Twins spokesman Sean Harlin said. Munson was given a minor league deal.

The 28-year-old Romero went 7-4 with an ERA of 3.51 in 74 appearances for Minnesota last season. In six seasons, all with the Twins, he is 21-17 with 22 saves and a 4.49 ERA.

Munson became a free agent when the Detroit Tigers did not offer him a contract after last season. He hit .212 with 19 home runs and 49 RBIs in 2004.

The deals were originally announced on WCCO Radio by manager Ron Gardenhire and pitching coach Rick Anderson as part of the Twins Winter Caravan, an annual promotional bus tour for the team and its broadcast network.

Pitt starter Demetris suspended indefinitely

PITTSBURGH — Pittsburgh starting guard Yuri Demetris was suspended indefinitely Sunday for disciplinary reasons.

Catch Jamie Dixon said in a statement that Demetris would not practice while serving the suspension. Dixon did not indicate when or if Demetris would rejoin the No. 20 Panthers (12-2, 2-1 Big East).

"Discipline and proper behavior must remain the foundation of our program," Dixon said.

Demetris, a 6-foot-4 senior from Pittsburgh, has started all 14 games and ranks fifth on the team in minutes played. He's averaging 38.8 points, all with rebounds. He did not score but had seven rebounds in 21 minutes Saturday in a 67-63 victory over Seton Hall.

Pitt plays at St. John's on Tues-

day and at No. 12 Connecticut on Saturday.

TCU's Irvin bolts Division I record 10 shots

FORT WORTH, Texas — TCU's Sandra Irvin set an NCAA Division I record with 16 blocked shots in the Lady Frogs' 75-34 win over UAB on Sunday.

Irvin also had 20 points and 18 rebounds for the first triple-double in school history.

Irvin broke the NCAA women's record of 15 set by Any Lundquist of Loyola Marymount set in December 1992 against Western Kentucky. The NCAA men's record of 14 is held by four players, including David Robinson and Shawn Bradley.

TCU (13-5, 4-0 Conference USA) trailed 7-2 just three minutes into the game, then went on an 44-1 run to take a 46-8 halftime lead. The Lady Blazens (4-13, 1-3) ended a 19-minute scoreless drought when Lauren Brittingham scored with 18:16 left in the game.

TCU finished the night with 19 blocked shots to tie the NCAA women's record for a team.

Memphis forward Banks ineligible for rest of season

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — Memphis sophomore forward Sean Banks will sit out the rest of the season after being declared academically ineligible.

Banks, who started 10 games this season and was averaging 14.5 points and 5.8 rebounds, said he hopes to take classes at another school to help regain his eligibility.

"I'm sorry that I let my teammates, coaches, Coach (John) Calipari, the university and the city of Memphis down," Banks said Sunday. "The situation I am in is my own fault."



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SPORTS



Niners pick Ravens' Nolan as new coach, Page 29

No place like home

Patriots' defense stifles Colts once again

BY HOWARD ULMAN
The Associated Press

FOXBORO, Mass. — The quintessential quarterback keeps running into the quintessential team. For the second year in a row, the New England Patriots made MVP Peyton Manning look ordinary and his Indianapolis teammates inept, this time beating them 20-3 Sunday behind Corey Dillon's 144 yards rushing. The Pats held the ball nearly 38 minutes, leaving Manning hardly any time to work his magic.

"I think our defense is what made this game successful," Patriots quarterback Tom Brady said. "Three points to one of the best offenses in the history of football is incredible."

Manning's quarterbacking brilliance was neutralized as usual by Bill Belichick's punishing defense and the Colts' Super Bowl aspirations ended yet again on this snowy New England field.

"It was an excellent run, a fine year," Manning said. "But when you finish with a loss in the playoffs, you can't be happy about it. Eventually, it will be our time. ... All I can think about right now is losing this game."

Manning is now 0-7 in Foxboro. Brady is 7-0 in the postseason.

For the defending champions, one more win in Pittsburgh and it's on to Jacksonville, Fla., for their third Super Bowl trip in four years.

Tedy Bruschi, Willie McGinest and the rest of the Patriots' defense spent the day frustrating Manning, who was 27-for-42 for 238 yards. In a stunning failure for the NFL's most prolific passing attack, the Colts managed only one field goal.

"I don't have a clue," said Edgerin James, held to 39 yards rushing. "I really don't know what happened out there. I was just trying to do what I can do."

The conditions were just right for the Patriots' strategy: run the ball, throw short passes and watch the clock tick down. New England did just that, putting to-



New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady reacts after scoring a touchdown during the fourth quarter of their AFC divisional playoff game against the Indianapolis Colts on Sunday. The Patriots won 20-3.

gether its three most time-consuming drives of the season.

Manning's timing with his receivers was off from the beginning, and the tone was set on the Colts' second series when a third-down pass went right through the hands of tight end Dallas Clark — a play that likely would have produced a first down.

The cold temperatures couldn't have helped Indianapolis, which plays home games in the 72-de-

gree warmth of the RCA Dome. Last year in Foxboro, Manning threw four interceptions in a 24-14 AFC title game loss.

Manning, who set NFL records with 49 touchdowns and a 121.1 passer rating in the regular season, delivered his worst performance this year, failing to throw a touchdown pass for the first time on his way to a 69.3 rating.

As for the Patriots, Dillon keyed a ball-control offense that

SEE PATS ON PAGE 29



Philadelphia Eagles wide receiver Freddie Mitchell, left, is congratulated by teammate Jon Runyan after scoring a touchdown in first quarter against the Vikings on Sunday. The Eagles won 27-14.

Eagles show no rust, make most of Vikings' miscues

BY ROB MAADDI
The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Freddie Mitchell backed up his big mouth with a big game.

Mitchell did his best Terrell Owens impersonation with two touchdowns and a clever celebration, helping the Philadelphia Eagles advance to their fourth straight NFC championship game with a 27-14 victory over the Minnesota Vikings on Sunday.

And, just like Owens, the All-Pro wide receiver sidelined by an ankle injury, the loquacious Mitchell enjoyed the spotlight.

"I'm a special player," Mitchell said, wearing a cowboy hat and bow tie. "I'm just going to take advantage of every opportunity because I don't get much. I want to thank my hands for being so great."

Though it was the Eagles' first meaningful game in nearly a month, they showed no rust. Donovan McNabb led the offense into the end zone on three of the first four possessions and the defense shut down Daunte Culpepper, Randy Moss and the rest of the NFC's second-highest scoring offense.

Only Michael Vick and the Falcons stand in the way of the Eagles' first trip to the Super Bowl in 24 years. Philadelphia, which has lost three consecutive NFC title games, the last two at home, hosts Atlanta next Sunday — the first time a team has hosted three straight conference championships.

"We need to seal the deal next week, no questions asked," said linebacker Ike Reese, who had one of the team's two interceptions. "I talked to the players and said, 'Sacrifice for a week. Sacrifice for the good of the team, whatever it is. Do extra.'"

The Eagles (14-3) did enough against the Vikings, coming up with big plays on offense and defense, silencing critics who thought coach Andy Reid shouldn't have rested most of his starters for almost two full games.

McNabb finished 21-for-33 for 286 yards and two TDs, and Mitchell had five catches for 65 yards and one TD and recovered a fumble in the end zone for another score.

"I guess the time we had off, we weren't too rusty," McNabb said.

SEE EAGLES ON PAGE 30

Flawless final round lifts Singh to Sony Open title Page 31